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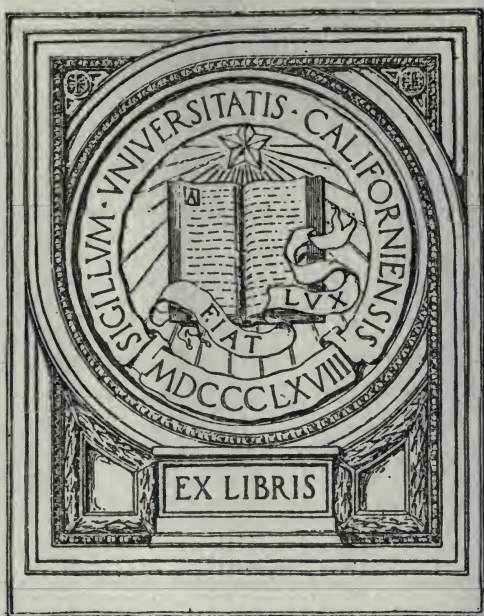
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OF
MARIENDORPT.

BY
JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

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THE MAID
OF
MARIENDORPT.

A Play,
IN FIVE ACTS.



BY
JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES,
AUTHOR OF "VIRGINIUS," "THE HUNCHBACK," &c.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

MDCCCXXXVIII.

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TO THE
ADVERTISERS

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN,
WHITEFRIARS.

DEDICATION.

9th October, 1838.

MY DEAR SIR,

Permit me to inscribe this Drama to the man, whose spontaneous good offices of anxious confiding friendship have essentially facilitated the prosecution of my literary labours, during a protracted period of peculiar difficulty.

Your attached and faithful servant,

J. S. KNOWLES.

TO EDWARD COOPER, ESQ.

33, Piccadilly.

ADVERTISEMENT.

TO MISS PORTER'S novel of "The Village of Mariendorpt"
I am indebted for the plot of this drama. She will excuse,
I trust, modification and omissions, which my peculiar craft
rendered, as I conceived, indispensable; and, at the same
time, accept my thanks for many an hour of delightful
instructive beguilement derived from the perusal of her
works.

CHARACTERS.



GENERAL KLEINER, <i>Governor of Prague</i>	. .	MR. STRICKLAND.
BARON IDENSTEIN, <i>his Nephew</i>	. . .	MR. WALTER LACY.
LIEUTENANT OF THE CASTLE	. . .	MR. BISHOP.
JOSEPH, <i>a Jew, friend to Muhldenau</i>	. .	MR. WEBSTER.
AHAB, <i>his Steward</i>	. . .	MR. GOUGH.
MUHLDENAU, <i>the Minister of Mariendorpt</i>	. .	MR. KNOWLES.
RUPERT, <i>betrothed to Meeta</i>	. . .	MR. WARRELL.
HANS, <i>Servant to Muhldenau</i>	. . .	MR. BUCKSTONE.
RODOLPH	} <i>Soldiers</i>	MR. GALLOT.
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COURIER	MR. CLARK.
SERVANT.		
ADOLPHA, <i>wife of Idenstein</i>	. . .	MISS COOPER.
MADAME ROSELHEIM, <i>Mother of Rupert</i>	. .	MRS. DAWSON.
MEETA, <i>daughter to Muhldenau</i>	. . .	MISS ELPHINSTONE.
ESTHER, <i>housekeeper to Muhldenau</i>	. . .	MRS. GLOVER.

Soldiers, Male and Female Servants, &c.

THE MAID OF MARIENDORPT

ACT I.

SCENE I.—A GARDEN, LOW GARDEN WALL, AND
A HOUSE.

Enter a COURIER.

COURIER.

Hoa, there! You in the garden there!

HANS—*without.*

Anan!—(*Enters.*)

Good day, Sir. A fine morning. Did you call?

O Esther! Esther!

COURIER.

Who lives here?

HANS.

My master.

COURIER.

That know I well as you do! Do you think
I took you for the owner of the house?

HANS.

I never said you did. O Esther!

COURIER.

Who
Lives here?

HANS.

My master, as I said before.

COURIER.

You sluggish-witted knave ! I want to know
Your master's name.

HANS.

Couldn't you tell me so
At once ? What need of going round about,
The gate before your nose ? Why give you talk,
And call you names, when all the fault's your own ?
How could I guess it was my master's name
You wished to know—O Esther !

COURIER.

Who lives here ?

HANS.

The minister of Mariendorpt.

COURIER.

Is that
Thy master's name ?

HANS.

Why, 'tis all one. His name
Is Muhldenau, and he's the minister
Of Mariendorpt.

COURIER.

Is that the only door
To the house ?

HANS.

Go round, you'll find another door,
The proper one—O Esther !

COURIER.

This way ?

HANS.

Yes.

COURIER.

I'd like to have the quick'ning of thy wits !

ESTHER—*without*.

What does that coxcomb speaking there so high ?

HANS.

There's Esther coming ! You had best be off !

COURIER.

Hang you and her together !

[*Goes out.*]

HANS.

That is kind.

I would not mind to hang along with her !

I'm sick for love ! I'm sure I am ! I have lost

My appetite ! My stomach was my clock

That used to give me note of eating-time—

It never warns me now ! A smoking dish

Was sure to set my heart a-beating once ;

Now be it flesh, or fish, or fowl, or aught,

It moves me nothing. I would rather feast—

A thousand times I would—on Esther's face !

I'm mortal sick for love ! I used to sleep ;

Scarce touch'd my head my pillow, I was off,

And, let me lie, I took my measure on't

Six hours, at least, upon a stretch ! but now

I toss and turn, lie straight, or doubled up,

Enfold mine arms, or throw them wide abroad,

Rhyme o'er my prayers, or count a hundred out,

And then begin again—yet not a wink

The richer for't, but rise as I lie down !

And 'tis true love that ails me !—very love !

Of womankind but one can work my cure !
'Tis not as one may fancy veal, and yet
Put up with mutton ! If I get not her,
I starve and die ! How I do love thee, Esther !
But thou regard'st it not, nor pay'st it heed ;
Thou ratest me as nothing ; but I'm something,
Or never had I fall'n in love with thee.
Nor durst I tell thee how I love thee, Esther !
O ! my fair Esther ! O ! my goddess, Esther !
My lily, pink, rose, tulip, everything
That's beautiful and sweet !—would thou wast by
To hear the love names I'm calling thee !

ESTHER *enters, speaking angrily, holding some roots.*

ESTHER.

Hoa, sirrah Hans ! Is this your work ?

HANS.

Dear Esther!

Esther, I can bear anything except
Your anger ! labour without wages !—work
From morn till night—go without breakfast, dinner,
Or supper—suffer aught, yet be a man !
But when you rate me I am good for nothing!—
A joint that's pick'd to the bone—fish, three days stale—
Wine gone a month without the stopper—cheese
Scoop'd to the rind and kept in a hot pantry,
Or foot of capon only with the strings
Raked from the garbage where 't has lain a week !
Don't scold me then—in sooth you should not do't,
For never say I unkind word to thee,
But call thee still all sorts of loving names.

ESTHER.

You've spoil'd my garden! hoe'd my tulips up
Instead of weeds—you have—

HANS.

Don't stamp at me,
It makes my heart jump—Ah !—'Twas kind of you
To stop ! But knew she how I loved her foot,
She would not stamp it at me.

ESTHER.

Why do you touch
My garden ?

HANS.

'Tis to make it orderly ;
Keep the earth smooth, and rake it small as crumbs ;
Prop the tall flowers with standards ; clear the beds
Of chick-weed, grass, and thievish dandelion,
That sucks up all the nourishment around it ;
Trim the box edges straight and of a piece,
And roll the gravel walks till they are even
And smooth as any carpet.

ESTHER.

Would your pains
Would spare themselves ! The other day you broke
My finest rose.

HANS.

It was with kissing it !
It was indeed your finest rose, and so
I call'd it Esther, and in very truth
Made love to it, and in my rapture broke it !
O Esther, if you knew—

ESTHER.

Knew what ?

HANS.

Nay, nothing.
You take me up so snappishly ! I am sure
I bear you much good will—I say but good

Because I am afraid to tell you what
I bear you ; and when you intreat me harshly
I can't endure it, but it brings my heart
Into my throat, that I begin to choke,
And then I fall a-crying. Don't you see
I'm crying now—and wiping of my eyes?

ESTHER.

A fly has got into them.

HANS.

Do you say
A fly? I would it were so small a thing !
I would it were a gnat, a wasp, a hornet—
Better be stung by anything than Esther.
A fly indeed ! I would it were a fly—
It was no fly ! O Esther, if you knew !

ESTHER.

Knew what ? What dost thou mean ?

HANS.

Alack-aday !

ESTHER.

Go clean the knives and forks !—(*Stamping at him.*)

HANS.

They are made of steel,
And steel is hard, and, if it is, no wonder.
'Tis steel—and 'tis its nature ! 'Tis not so
With human hearts, for they are flesh and blood,
Whereof was never made, nor will be made,
Nor can be made, a knife and fork, and yet
No steel at times is harder ! 'Tis a pity.

ESTHER.

Is all that silver clean'd ?

HANS.

How sweet a sound

Has silver ! Yet 'tis heat proof. Without fear
You dip it in a pot of boiling broth,
Which you can not the tongue, and yet how harsh
The tongue will sometimes sound !

ESTHER—*stamping.*

Have you your wits ?

HANS.

Yes !—No !—I only have a part of them.
I'll tell you where the other part is gone
If you will let me.

ESTHER.

Well, Sir ?

HANS.

If you knew——

ESTHER—*stamping more violently.*

Begone, I'll never know !—(HANS goes out.)—What does he mean ?

The creature's not in love with me ? Ne'er yet
Met I the man was bold enough to woo me,
And that among bold men—and would he try,
Whom nature by mistake did frame a man,
And give a chicken's heart to ? I should like
To see him woo me ! Why I have ta'en his part,
As doth a mother her girl-petted boy's
A thousand times—saved him from kicks and beatings—
Fought for him while he has stood by and crow'd
To see me win his battle——“ If I knew !”
I half suspect the thing's in love with me !
And, now I think on't, for this month or two
The boy is alter'd wond'rously ! He sighs,
And sighs !—and mumbles to himself, and goes
Moping about the house. Sure as I live,
The boy's in love, and I'm to have a husband !

I, to whom man durst never say a soft thing
The second time ! A husband ! I shall die
At the thought (*laughs*). Make Hans my husband (*laughs*)—
then the end

O' th' world were come (*laughs*). O dear ! my sides will crack
With laughter ! Esther go to church with Hans !
Take oath to love, to honour, and obey him ! (*laughs*)
Yes, with a curtsey ! and then take him home
In my apron ! Esther become wife to Hans ! (*laughs*)
Hans husband unto Esther ! (*laughs*). Husband ! (*laughs*)
Husband !

Enter MADAME ROSELHEIM.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Why, Esther, what's the matter ?

ESTHER—*still laughing.*

I'm laughing !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

I see you are. What makes you laugh ?

ESTHER—*laughing.*

A thought

That came into my head.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Dismiss it then—

Behoves you to be busy with grave matters.

Your master leaves us. He is summon'd hence

By sudden requisition of high duty.

ESTHER.

How soon ?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

At once. Prepare for his departure.

ESTHER.

Goes Meeta with him ?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

No, nor any one.

A secret mission takes him for the service
Of her, the Royal dame, who was his mistress.

ESTHER.

And how will Meeta bear it?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

As she ought.

Meeta knows nothing paramount to duty.

ESTHER.

And this to fall upon the very eve
Of her wedding. Will it stop it?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

I don't know.

ESTHER.

I hope it will not; I have fear of crosses
In all such matters.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Thinkest thou of weddings?

ESTHER—*stifling a laugh.*

Madam!

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Why, Esther, what's the matter with you?

ESTHER.

Nothing!—That is—Unless I laugh I'll die!

[*Goes out, laughing immo*

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

What's come to her? 'Tis not her mood to laugh—
At such a time too. But I have not thought
To waste on her. A dangerous mission this—
A search unauthorized; and that, with foes
On every side of him. The reverend man
For duty puts his life in jeopardy,

Nor pauses, but as soon as call'd obeys.
His daughter on the eve of marriage too,
As Esther said—her bridegroom daily looked for,
My son my Rupert—fit to mate a princess,
But yet more fitly with sweet Meeta match'd,
In virtue without peer ! Will he postpone
Their nuptials ? No, he will not, if I know him.
But whatsoever he resolves is wise ;
For piety is still the good man's law. [Goes out.]

SCENE II.—A ROOM IN MUHLDENAU'S HOUSE.

Enter MUHLDENAU.

MUHLDENAU.

Meeta ! I thought she was alone with me !
No wonder if the news transfixes her
With deep abstraction, newly told ; when I,
Already in possession on't, alike
Forget myself ! Why, Meeta ! Come, my child.

MEETA—*entering.*

And must you go ?

MUHLDENAU.

The voice that calls me hence
I never disobey'd—durst disobey !
Thou art here in safety. This, thy father's will,
From want assures thee—leaves thee heir indeed
To modest competence. Thy nuptials too,
Which, for this chance I would not have postponed,
Give thee a father in a husband. Thus
Absolved from care on thy account, I go ;
For thou art good, my child, and hast beside

A Father whom thou lovest to obey,
With power no less than will to guard his child,
That trusts in him—in every place at hand,
At every hour—the Father of thy father !
In whose strong hands, and pitiful as strong,
I leave thee, saying, “ Let his will be done ! ”

MEETA.

Will you be long away ?

MUHLDENAU.

Not long, I hope ;
Not very long. What call you long, my child ?
A year ?

MEETA.

O, not a year !

MUHLDENAU.

No ! no ! No fear
Of that.—No ; certainly I shall not be
A year away.

MEETA.

Not half a year ?

MUHLDENAU.

Not half
A year.

MEETA.

Half that ?

MUHLDENAU.

I know not, but should think
A lapse more brief should bring me home again.

MEETA.

Perhaps a month ?

MUHLDENAU.

Perhaps ; but graver things
Lie in the hands of seconds. Yea ; a second

Might balk departure, yet remove me from thee,
Never again to meet thee—in this world—
In this world, Meeta ! so, think less of absence,
That here hath termination.

MEETA.

Is the mission
That takes you, dangerous ?

MUHLDENAU.

I'll not deceive you ;
It is.

MEETA.

Sweet Heaven have mercy !

MUHLDENAU.

It is well
To call for that—but better 'tis to know
That what Heaven wills is right !—Believe in that,
Thou'lt find it in the end to thy account.
But what is danger ? Is't always the thing
We call so ? Sin is danger, certainly,
Putting in jeopardy man's proper life,
The life to come !—but what is danger else ?
'Tis hard to say ! Of this, howe'er, be sure,
More oft it wears a smooth face than a rough,
So for the most part found when least expected,
And fatalest ! The storms that are foretold
Are easiest met—the reefs avoided
That raise the ripple ! He did not feast that night
Who saw the writing, to the prophet's mind
Explain'd alone, although reveal'd to all ;
And while the impious revel yet held on
The flood did turn its wave, to let the surge
Of battle in, and ruin overthrew
Him and his kingdom ! Hear me, Meeta ; glad

This summons makes me, tho' it threatens danger ;
And, for I know that it will hearten thee
To bear my absence, I will tell thee why.
Sit down, my child. Thou hadst a sister, Meeta.

MEETA.

A sister ?

MUHLDENAU.

I have kept the knowledge from thee,
To save the questioning had follow'd it,
And could not be replied to without cost
Of suffering, while recollection of
Bereavement yet was young.

MEETA.

I had a sister ?

MUHLDENAU.

You had a sister.

MEETA.

Had ?

MUHLDENAU.

Had, Meeta.

MEETA.

Had !

Alas ! was I so rich, and knew it not ?
I had a sister ! O what light and warmth
Of love, I never knew before, the thought
Hath shot into my soul !—And now,—and now,
All's strangely dark and cold ! How is it, father,
I had a sister, and remember not ?

MUHLDENAU.

Because 'twas in thy childhood, Meeta, when
The memory, too tender, yields impressions
Their causes ta'en away.—And yet there was
A time thou didst remember such a thing !

MEETA.

Was there? O heartless Meeta! Once remember
She had a sister, and forget it ever!

MUHLDENAU.

Thou hast forgot the siege of Magdeburgh.

MEETA.

No! I remember that! I never hear
The thunder, but I think of that!—or see
The lightning set the sky on fire, but that
Comes back to me!—No!—no!—I recollect
The siege of Magdeburgh!

MUHLDENAU.

How long did it last?

MEETA.

One night.

MUHLDENAU.

Three months!

MEETA.

I only recollect
One night—and it was in the street, and men
With horrid looks and yells ran to and fro!
On horseback some, and some on foot—some firing,
And some with swords which they did whirl and dart
As they moved on.

MUHLDENAU.

Ay! mercy shewed they not
That night to man or woman!

MEETA.

Woman? No!
I saw them seize one by the hair!—I am sure
I did!

MUHLDENAU.

You did—you told me so yourself.

MEETA.

I told you so myself?

MUHLDENAU.

You have forgot!

And can you wonder? You were barely then
Turned five years old. Were you not near that woman?

MEETA.

Yes! close to her! I had a hold of her.

MUHLDENAU.

That too you told me. Do you not remember?

MEETA.

No.

MUHLDENAU.

No!—not when I found thee in the street
Wandering alone, and 'twixt thy sobbings, on
Thy father calling?

MEETA.

No.

MUHLDENAU.

Thou told'st it me
The following day, and often afterwards.
I let the fruitless inquisition drop,
So memory fell asleep! Remember'st aught
That woman carried?

MEETA.

Carried?

MUHLDENAU.

Carried.

MEETA.

No.

MUHLDENAU.

She was thy sister's nurse.

MEETA.

It was a child
She carried ! Was it ? Yes !—I see it now
In her arms, as plain as I see you. O, heart !
What hast thou been about ? All's clear as noon !—
A child she carried, and it was my sister !
I recollect my sister ! Were they killed ?

MUHLDENAU.

The woman was.

MEETA.

And not my sister ?

MUHLDENAU.

That
Knows Heaven alone ! That night of carnage over,
We searched the street—the woman's body found,
But of thy little sister not a trace !

MEETA.

And you did search the street?—She was not kill'd !
Had she been killed, her body had been found
Sure as the nurse's—Yes !—and I have heard
Nine times in ten, when caught in mortal strait
A woman with an infant in her arms,
Altho' she lose herself, will save her load !
She was not kill'd, for didn't I escape !
I that did wail and clamour as you say !—
They hurt not me whom else soe'er they hurt ;
And would they harm a little speechless child,
As like to smile at them as look afraid
To come to them, if it could walk, as fly ?
'Tis not in mortal man that has his wits,
To slay a little harmless, witless child !
To wound it, scratch !—I would stake my life
She was not kill'd—Some one did snatch her up—

Take her away—put in a place of safety—
God bless him ! cherishes her now perhaps
As if she were his own ! Do you not think
She is alive ?—I'm sure she is alive ;
I have a sister still !

MUHLDENAU.

Thy sanguine heart
A little light enlarges into day.
It is thy father's nature which thou hast,
Uncheck'd in thee, in him subdued by time.
Now see'st thou why this summons is a thing
To welcome ? Hitherto my debt to thee,
My yearnings for my lost one still has held
In check—yes, yearnings, Meeta ; for I own
The likeness, tho' a faint one, of thy hope,
Touching thy sister, round thy father's heart
Hath ever hung ! but now that I am call'd,
Commanded—for 'tis even so, my child—
To leave thee—tho' the track I must pursue
Borders with danger, yet it is a journey
I undertake more pleased, than I'd forego !
For—if we may believe in presages—
And wherefore not if we believe at all,
As who shall shape and bound the ways of heaven—
To other issue than its proper one,
And nearer to myself this mission leads—
Perhaps concerning thee !—perhaps—Yes, Meeta,
I cannot help the thought, for, next to thee,
It is the stay of my old age—perhaps
Concerning—

MEETA.

My lost sister.

MUHLDENAU.

Yes, my child,
Not dead, I do believe, but lost. How well
You reason'd on't ! The body was not found :
A nurse, as thou did'st say, will lose herself,
Yet save her load—'tis not, I do believe,
In flesh and blood to slay a little child :
You're right, the child was saved—is living yet !
You have made your father turn a boy again !
Well, be it so ! I do believe it, Meeta !
You are content, my child, to let me go ?

MEETA.

I am, sir—that is, not, as at the first,
My heart grows sick at thought of losing you.
Could n't I go too ?—No—no !—There is danger,
And that's my answer. Farewell, father !—There !
We'll say good-bye at once !

MUHLDENAU.

Not yet, my child !
Should'st thou require a friend when I'm away,
Here is the name of one. He lives in Prague :
He is a Jew.

MEETA.

A Jew ?

MUHLDENAU.

He'll give thee counsel,
Should'st thou have need of it.

MEETA.

A Jew ?

MUHLDENAU.

Or if
Thy funds run low in sudden exigence,
He'll help them mount again.

MEETA.

A Jew?

MUHLDENAU.

Why not?

MEETA.

And I a Christian father's child!

MUHLDENAU.

Is not

A Jew a man? Would'st thou, a Christian, help

A Jew, that's of thy creed an enemy?

MEETA.

I would!

MUHLDENAU.

And why not then a Jew help thee?

I know a reason; but the blame on't lies

Not on the other side. It is the race

Elect from all mankind, whose course is mark'd

From youngest time by high behests from Heaven,

By miracles and oracles, and deeds

Of mighty men who put their trust therein!

Don't fear thy father's friend!—Don't fear the Jew!

MEETA.

I am corrected, sir.—I shall observe.

MUHLDENAU.

Here comes thy Rupert's mother—and in time.

Enter MADAME ROSELHEIM.

My absence, madam, need not be a let

To stay my daughter's nuptials with thy son.

I know a soldier's time is not his own;

And what is granted him, behoves him use.

So, Meeta, do not wait for my return,
If past the time delay'd.—Farewell, my child !
Madam, farewell !—We are in the hands of Heaven !

*[Goes out ; and MEETA, after a struggle, falls weeping
upon the neck of MADAME ROSELHEIM.]*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—MUHLDENAU'S GARDEN.

WREATHS OF FLOWERS HUNG FROM THE BRANCHES OF THE
TREES—RUSTIC SEATS HERE AND THERE, ORNAMENTED.

Enter ESTHER and HANS.

HANS.

Now, Esther, have I pleased you? Is there aught
I have forgotten? The garlands properly disposed,
The seats in order, and the company,
Bid as you told me? There's the music too,
Three fiddles—first and second, and a bass,
A hautboy, flute and harp! Are you not pleased?
Look pleas'd! Do, Esther! Seldom do you smile
On me; and welcomer than Christmas day,
Or New-Year's day, or any day o' the year,
Were one kind look from Esther.

ESTHER.

To say truth,
You have managed finely!

HANS.

Law! how sweet you smile!
What's honey now? I wouldn't take a hive
To pay for't with that smile! Indeed I wouldn't,
In very deed, I wouldn't—and I'm fond
Of honey! furious fond of it. O dear!

A thing so sweet to see, what must it be
To taste? O happy days of boyhood, when
Whatever I did right was sure to get me
A kiss from my mother. Times are changed with Hans;
Do what he may, he gets no kisses now.

ESTHER.

Now he wants me to kiss him!—So.—Good Hans,
'Tis not with men you know, as 'tis with boys;
Kisses do come to boys, but men must fetch them.

HANS.

But knew I I could get them—I would fetch them!

ESTHER.

Why, Hans, how can you know unless you try?

HANS.

Unless I try!—Now mean you what you say?

ESTHER.

Why say it else?

HANS.

And they'll be had by fetching?

ESTHER.

A fool may tell they'll not be had without.

HANS.

O Esther!

ESTHER.

Well?

HANS.

Would I could hear thee say,
“O Hans!”

ESTHER.

O Hans!—There, I've said it!—Well?

HANS.

Durst I but try? But then there is the fear!

ESTHER.

And there's the hope ! the flower beside the weed.

HANS.

O Esther !—Oh.

ESTHER.

O Hans !

HANS.

Give me a kiss !

ESTHER.

Fool !—said I not before,

Men must fetch kisses, tho' to boys they come ?

HANS.

O would you fancy me a boy !

ESTHER.

I do ;

Not only fancy thee, but know thee one !

HANS.

Then treat me as a boy.

ESTHER.

How ?

HANS.

As you said

Just now that boys were treated.

ESTHER.

As I live,

He'd have it come from me ! What said I now ?

HANS.

You said that kisses come to boys.

ESTHER.

I did ;

And so do railings, cuffs, and fifty things

That are not half so sweet.—Did I not say

The dance was to be practised ? Where are then

The partners? Where's the music? In a minute
The bridegroom comes, when all should be prepared,
Is't then a time make ready? Well? Don't stand
With gaping mouth when busy hands are needed—
Fetch here the dancers and the music.

HANS—*without moving.*

Yes.

ESTHER.

Is that the way to do it? Will they come
With only saying "Yes"? 'Art thou a post?

HANS.

In sooth I know not what I am! I know
I'm not myself! I may be man or woman,
A fish or a brute beast, a stone, or log
Of wood, for what I care! I would 'twere now
All over with me, and the coroner
Were sitting on me! It will come to that!
I'll do thy bidding—then I'll go and die—
I will! I'll tie me a true-lover's knot,
You'll see I will—Good bye!—

ESTHER—*stamping.*

Hans!

HANS.

Well?

ESTHER.

Have here
The dancers, ere I stamp my foot again.

HANS.

I fly.

[*Goes out.*]

ESTHER.

Poor Hans! The boy is deep in love!
How have I managed to light up this flame?
"Heigh-ho!" "O dear!" The simpleton, I vow,

Grows interesting. I should grieve for Hans,
Were aught to happen to him. It is hard
To be the bane of a poor fellow's peace,
Much more to be the death of him ! Should he go
And drown himself ! or hang himself indeed !
Hans ! (*calling*) I could never bear myself again !
To see him laid out in his shroud ! Hans ! Hans ! (*calling*)
To follow the poor fellow to his grave—
To see him lower'd into 't.—Why, Hans ! (*calling*) I hear
The earth upon his coffin ! Hans, I say !
Where are you ?

HANS—*entering with dancers.*

Here ! Is any thing the matter,
You call'd me in a tone of such distress ?

ESTHER—*recovering herself.*

Am I not in a hurry, and you take
An hour and more to do a minute's work !

HANS.

I'm sure I'm hardly gone a minute.

ESTHER.

Fool !

You cannot tell a minute from an hour !

HANS.

Here are the dancers and the music, but
One partner is a-wanting.

ESTHER.

You stand up !

HANS.

It is a woman's wanting.

ESTHER.

'Tis no matter,
Take you her place.

HANS.

I'll do whate'er you bid me,
But 'tis too hard to make a woman of me.

ESTHER—*impatiently*.

Are you ready?

HANS.

Yes! I'll dance him till I tire him.

[*Dance.* HANS exerts himself to the utmost, constantly looking towards ESTHER, who gradually becomes pleased, and still more and more enjoys his vivacity. His partner gives up, and HANS dances by himself before ESTHER, who humours his steps. The others at length dance off.]

HANS.

Danced I to please you?

ESTHER.

Yes; and there—your thanks. [Kisses him.]

HANS.

And there are yours for paying me so well! [Kissing again.]
Mars! if I haven't kiss'd her!

ESTHER.

Hans! Why, Hans!

HANS.

Nay, don't be angry! All the blame was yours;
You kiss'd me first. 'Twas only kiss for kiss!

ESTHER.

Here's some one coming! Why, you idle boy!
Nothing within, without the house, to do,
That you are standing here? No plate to clean?
No knives and forks? no furniture to polish?
No glasses nor decanters to be rinsed,
And dried, and clear'd? When put you last to rights
Your pantry? 'Twas in wond'rous order when

I look'd into it yesterday ! Go, sir ;
A gaping mouth won't serve for busy hands !
To work, I say ! Do you hear me, boy ?

HANS.

I do,
Yet hardly can believe it.

ESTHER.

Hence. To work ! [HANS goes out.

MADAME ROSELHEIM—*entering*.

To work ? Why, Esther, 'tis a holiday !
Knew you what you were saying ? Do you hear me ?
Esther turn'd girl ! May I believe my eyes—
And they have never failed me yet—I saw thee
Kiss the lad Hans just now ?

ESTHER.

'Twas he kiss'd me.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

You first kiss'd him.

ESTHER.

Well, if I did, I did.
He danced just now, and pleased me 'twas so well—
And so I kiss'd him, as a woman may
A boy !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

You are right ; you might have said a child :
Hans is no more.

ESTHER.

Hans no more than a child ?
He's twenty-five—he says so—next birth-day.
A pretty child indeed ! If he's a child,
Children are marriageable ! Such a child
My mother's husband was, when birth of me
Made him a father.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Be not angry, Esther ;
I did not say of Hans he was too young
To be a husband—if you fancy him.

ESTHER.

I fancy Hans? I fancy living man,
And Hans especially ! I, that am gall
At very thought a man should be my master !
I, to whom never ventured man to say
Soft thing a second time—and those have tried
Who have back'd furious seas, and shown a front
To bayonet points and loaded cannon mouths—
And I to fancy Hans ! I thank you, ma'am.
Dress up a girl in boy's clothes for me, do,
And send her me for husband ! Hans indeed
To call me wife ! I to call Hans my husband !
How I should like to hear myself ! I'll marry
When it rains husbands ; but it shan't be Hans !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Well, Esther, do not fret.

ESTHER.

I fret ! I think
I see myself ! Fret about Hans ! I know
You did but jest. It was a rare conceit
To say I'd marry Hans (*laughs*). I'll kill myself
With laughing at the thought. Esther to marry—
And Hans, of all mankind !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

You are right. 'Twas jest !
I have always set you down for an old maid.
Go see if Meeta's ready.

ESTHER—*aside*.

An old maid !

Thank heaven I'm only five-and-thirty yet.

Old maid indeed, and only thirty-five!

I yet may live to be a grandmother!

[*Goes out.*]

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

No sign of Rupert yet, and noon is past.

He will not come. These nuptials will be stopp'd.

Her father's summons boded, as I thought,

No good. There is in the affairs of life,

As in the atmosphere, a season, where

To shining day succeedeth shining day;

But once the weather breaks, 'tis cloud and cloud,

And long deferr'd and slow the clearing up.

Enter MESSENGER with letters, and retires.

From Rupert! I was right—he will not come:

The field is ta'en a month before the time.

His leave has been recall'd. Poor Meeta! Go

Undress thee, girl! Thy gear of every day

Belongs to this on which thou thought'st to wear

The brightest suit that virginhood puts on!

This is to Meeta—from her father? No—

The hand is strange! Why, who should write to her

Except her father? About whom but him

Or Rupert, should she hear, and he has told

His errand in my letter! If it speaks

About her father, harm has fall'n upon him!

And what will Meeta do? A solid mind—

But has to learn to bear a father's ills!

What can have chanced? Perhaps imprisonment!

Not death? O no! not death! It cannot be!

Heaven, for his child's sake, for his own, will spare him.

[*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—MEETA'S DRESSING-ROOM.

MEETA and ESTHER enter—the former abstracted, the latter making a bridal knot.

ESTHER.

No favour for your breast ! A bride, and go
To church without a favour ! Well ! to think
Of all things *that* should be forgot ! Almost
As well forget your wedding-day itself !
Almost as well no wedding as no favour !
Know'st thou not so ?

[*Touching her.*]

MEETA.

What said you to me, Esther ?

ESTHER.

There ! I protest, as well it were the wall
I spoke to as to you ! as much 'twould hear me.
What said you to me, Esther ? Esther said—
It was your wedding-day—that you forgot
A favour for your breast—that she would make one—
And here 'tis ready ! Let me pin it on.

MEETA.

No word yet from my father !

ESTHER.

From your father ?
Your lover, don't you mean ?

MEETA.

I mean my father.

ESTHER.

Humph ! Give me anything but want of nature !
I do not like you, Meeta ! Flesh and blood

Are flesh and blood ! Were it my wedding-day,
Almost the very hour, and every minute
The bridegroom look'd for, would I, think you, Meeta,
Be running on my father? I'll be honest :
I'd think of something dearer—that I would,
And be a good child still !

MEETA.

You lost your father
When you were but an infant. You don't know
What 'tis to love a father.

ESTHER.

Do I not ?
Yes ; but I do ! It is to honour him,
So we are bidden—that is, to obey him—
Respectfully entreat him !

MEETA.

Nothing more ?

ESTHER.

What more ?

MEETA.

O, much !—O, very much !—Such things
We do to persons are indifferent to us,
Or to their stations ! There is something more—
Better—less earthly—more o' th' grain of Heaven—
A love that's indefinable !—that holds
Ourselves as nothing in respect of cherishing !
That still is kneeling tho' no limb be bent,
And looking up with ever-gushing will,
Anticipating wishes !—It is worship—
Altho' no lip be moved, no eye be strain'd,
No hands be clasp'd—like that which hath acceptance
Above—O' the soul ! O, how I love my father !
To say “ before my life ” is to say nothing—

That's his, and 'tis a gasp and over! but
To slave, beg, starve for him—forego possession
Of mine own dearest earthly wishes—havings—
I'd do it, Esther, in a moment!—Yes!
Not give 't a second thought! Remember'st thou
I once was froward with thee? I was then
A girl not ten years old—dost not remember?
I had found a hair of his—a long white hair,
And I had coil'd it up to keep for treasure;
But thou didst flout me for't and take't away,
And cast into the fire—whence all your might
It took to hold me. Yes, I would have thrust
My hand into the fire to save that hair!
That is to love a father!

ESTHER.

If it is,
Then know I not what is the love of one.

MEETA.

You never knew one, said I not before?
But mine was twice a parent—that is, Esther,
He was my father and my mother too.
I never knew my mother, but I am sure
I should have loved her—dearly loved her, Esther;
But my father—nurse was he to me, instructor,
Playmate, companion, father altogether!
Think of that, Esther. Playmate! Such a man
To dwindle into a child for my sake! There
I half believe I find the root of love
Which has struck deepest.—He to play the child
With his white hairs!—There is not one of them
But has a heart and soul in't—to me, Esther!—
Don't smile—You know you own you cannot tell
What 'tis to love a father.

Enter MADAME ROSELHEIM.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Meeta !

MEETA.

Well,

Dear Madame Rosenheim ?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

The post is in.

MEETA.

And Rupert does n't come ?—I thought 'twould be so !

I was prepared for it ! I wish'd it—tho'

My father will'd our nuptials should go on.

'Tis well ! O, if there be one hour, which more

Than any other craves a parent's presence,

'Tis that which gives his child away from him !

She should go with his blessing warm upon her, breathed

With an attesting kiss ; then may she go

With perfect hope, and cheerly take with her

The benisons of all kind wishers else !—

You know I love your son ?

MADAME ROSELHEIM—*weeps.*

I know it well,

My Meeta.

MEETA.

Madame !—Mother ! I'm the bride—

You must not weep till I do !—'Tis not fair,

I'll not be beat in disappointment, I

That have chief cause to feel it ! Is he ill ?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

No !—No !

MEETA.

Thank Heaven ! and yet some other cause

As grave as that of health perhaps prevents him ?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

No ; the campaign has open'd—nothing more.

MEETA.

Enough !—Long marches—nightly guards—chill sleeping
In the open fields—foragings—reconnoiterings
Skirmishings—stormings and pitch'd battles ! Rupert,
Poor Rupert—(*weeps*)—Mother, I am quits with you,
There are my tears 'gainst yours !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

I wasn't weeping
For Rupert, Meeta.

MEETA.

For whom, then ?—My father !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

For no one—that is, there's no cause I know of
Why I should weep.

MEETA.

Why weep, then ?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

'Twas a fear
I had——

MEETA.

About my father ?—Is that letter
For me ?—that, that's unopen'd ?—Give it me ; don't fear.
Tho' I'm a girl, I have a resolution. (*Reads letter.*)
Read it ! (*Handing it to MADAME ROSELHEIM.*)

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Arrested ! and a prisoner
In Prague !—His fate uncertain—but his life
In peril, Meeta ! (*Tottering, as on the point of fainting.*)

MEETA—*trying to recover her.*

Mother !—Madame !—Madame !—

Mother !—Madame Rosenheim, don't give way !—these things

Are catching, and I want to be myself !
I must be myself—I will be myself ! I'll not waver,
Flinch, droop, the matter of a moment.—Madame !
I have need of all the nerve I have—and help me !
Don't take it from me !—My father wants it all,
And he must have it, and shall !—Well, well ! give way !
The more you are water, the more will I be rock !
I am so !—Let me see——

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

My child !—my Meeta !
Thou show'st it not ; but, if I feel the shock,
What must it prove to thee !

MEETA.

Nothing, madame !—nothing !
Let's see——How many miles is Prague from this ?
I recollect—that's right !—that's right !—I have
My senses all about me—I thank Heaven !—
The paper that he gave me ?—It is here—
In my bosom !—I remember everything !—
I am quite myself !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Meeta ! this calmness frights me !

MEETA.

Don't mind it !—All is well !—I recollect,
To the very letter, all my father told me ;
And I will do his bidding.—A fine time
'Twould be for me to swoon ! (*laughs*)—a proper time ! (*laughs*)
I must not laugh ; for if I do, I'm lost !
Heaven give me firmness !—Of myself, I'm nothing !
There !—'tis gone off. I'll but provide myself,
And away ! (*going towards her chamber*).

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Where go you, Meeta ?

MEETA.

Nowhere—nowhere,
Where any heed.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

What go you, then, to do?

ESTHER.

Nothing that matters aught—but change my dress.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

But, Meeta!—

MEETA.

Mother, let me have my way!—
Don't hinder me, and do not follow me!
Else that may come you would not wish to come!
Command me, after, all my life, so now
You suffer me be mistress of myself! (*goes out*).

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

She makes me tremble—she's so little moved!
Why, Esther! are you too about to swoon?

ESTHER.

Almost I am!—My heart turn'd sick just now;
But it grows better.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

What do you think of Meeta?

ESTHER.

I wonder at her—but she's all a wonder!
Had you but heard her talk, ere you came in,
About her father!—

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

I'm afraid of her.
She is too calm—it is unnatural!—
She cannot be herself, thus to sustain
What taxes you and me too much, to whom
It comes not half so home!—She has not shed

A tear !—No sound of suffering—a moan,
A sigh—a breath, you could mistake for one—
Has 'scap'd her ! She forbade me follow her ;
But am I right to heed her ? Reason is gone
Ere you suspect that it has given way,
So this collectedness may be but crust,
Not substance ; which, while you believe it is,
It crumbles into dust ! We should not leave her
Alone.

ESTHER.

I heed her not !—I'll follow her ! (*going.*)

MEETA—*entering.*

Where are you going, Esther ?

ESTHER.

Into your chamber,
To look for you.

MEETA.

Well !—here I am !—What want you ?

ESTHER.

Why, you are dress'd as 'twere to go a journey !

MEETA.

I am.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

And whither go you, Meeta ?

MEETA.

To
My father !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Are you mad ?

MEETA.

I could be mad !

But I must keep my reason—and I will !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Reflect you on the distance?

MEETA.

'Tis a stride!

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

A stride! And do you calculate
The danger?

MEETA.

There's no danger—none but that
In which he lies!

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

You may be stopp'd by robbers!

MEETA.

There are no robbers.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Recollect the war!

MEETA.

There is no war.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Know'st that what thou art saying?

MEETA.

I do,—believe it. 'Tis the shortest way.
Thou'lt have to take 't at last!

ESTHER.

She shall not stir.

MEETA.

Nay, but I will!—and go!

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Don't let her, Esther;
Lay hold upon her.

ESTHER.

Will I not!

MEETA.

You will not!—

You must not!—you dare not! If you do, his blood
Lie at your door!

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Alas! what power have you
To help him, child?

MEETA.

My will!—Where there's the will,
You cannot tell but there may be the power!
Strong will can make a little power go far—
At least, can I not beg his enemies
To spare his life?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

You'll find their hearts are stone.

MEETA.

Perhaps; but I will try if they are flesh.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

And if it prove they are not?

MEETA.

Then, I'll deal
With his prison bolts and bars. Mother, 'tis vain!
Prevent me now, and I will 'scape again;
If not to-day, to-morrow. If not then,
The next day—or the following. So time
That's precious—every thing—is lost, and then
The mischief done, and no good come of it
That might have come, were it done promptly, madam!
Mother, 'tis reason, plain to speculation,
As the hand I lift before you now to Heaven
To register my vow, that no regard
Of difficulty, or unlikelihood,

Or danger, or persuasion, or enforcement,
Shall hold me back one moment from the attempt
'To save my father's life. Heaven bless you, madam !
Esther, good-bye ! That's right—no weeping—nothing
But a kiss, and part !—Good-bye!—Good-bye!—Good-bye!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—A ROOM IN JOSEPH'S HOUSE AT PRAGUE.

Enter JOSEPH and AHAB.

AHAB.

More gold !

JOSEPH.

Yes, Ahab, more ! The dross is mine,
Thou only hast the custody, and yet
Thou yield'st it me as it were drops of blood
From thine own heart ! I say, I want more gold,
And more to follow yet, if that suffice not ;
And, failing gold, I'll coin my parchments, plate,
Jewels, and furniture—my very roof—
But I shall find supplies !

AHAB.

And for a Christian ?

JOSEPH.

Thou art my brother—Jew. What could'st thou more
Than risk thy life for mine ?

AHAB.

I do not know

What greater venture man can risk for man
Than his own life.

JOSEPH.

Would'st thou risk thine for me ?
Thou art honest, Ahab, though thou lov'st thyself

Better than any living thing beside.
Thou pausest to consider ! Do not pause,
'Tis waste of time which I will save thee. Ahab,
Thou would'st not risk thy life for me. Now mark,—
When I did suffer persecution,
Ten years ago, in Spain,—when Christian men,
In their Master's name, did that which never yet
Their Master's precepts warranted—I say it,
For it is written, Ahab, written, plain
That he who runs may read—when Christian men
Gave human, living flesh to roast, because
We held the old faith and eschew'd the new,—
The Christian father of this Christian child
Did save my life at peril of his own !
Get the gold, Ahab ! He did that for me,
That was not of his creed, thou would'st not do,
Who art of mine ! Ahab, I felt it then,
The Master taught them right ! He is my neighbour
That does a neighbour's office to me !
The gold, and plenty on't—a hundred ducats !

AHAB.

A hundred ducats ?

JOSEPH.

'Tis the twentieth part
Of what remains ! A portion of his life
He did not risk, but all. Resolve at once
To do my bidding, else my mind may change,
And I may bid thee fetch the whole,—the whole !
A prompt compliance in a strait is best.
Where others have the power to make conditions,
Resistance tires forbearance. Fetch the gold,
For the sake of him who saved the hands that made it
From the fire.—Look here ! they are not cinders, Ahab,

But flesh; and thank a Christian. Fetch the gold!

[AHAB goes out.]

Poor girl! how she has wasted since she first
Came here: yet how her spirit lasts beyond
Her body: there she suffers no impairment.
My Rachel had been like her had she lived,—
The face reminds me of her as it shines
From the thick bower of her raven hair,
When now and then by chance I see it down!

Enter MEETA.

What news, my girl?

MEETA.

None!—I have sped to-day
As yesterday! The names of father, child,
Seem here to carry to men's hearts no import
Past that of lightest words. They hardly win
An audience for me. When they do, the eye
Of the listener, every other moment caught
By passing trivial'st things, admonishes
My tongue it only wastes an earnest suit
Upon a heedless ear. Once, as I thought,
An auditor was moved,—almost he seem'd
To give me hope,—I felt as if about
To cross the threshold of the prison, and
Blessings and thanks rose in my throat so thick,
That utterance did suffocate, and, but
For tears that sudden came to my relief,
I had fallen at his feet,—yet at that very moment
Some antic feat I saw not, but a wretch
Did practise within view, convulsed him straight
With laughter, 'mid the peals of which he left me,
As I had ne'er been standing there! A clap
Of thunder had not stunned me half so much.

JOSEPH.

Was he a sentinel ?

MEETA.

He was.

JOSEPH.

I wonder

What sentinel did keep his heart, to let

Incontinent and ribald folly in,

And pity standing weeping at the door !

MEETA.

They are all alike ! See. *[Showing an empty purse.]*

JOSEPH.

Thou hast emptied it ?

Well, I can fill it again !

MEETA.

All gone, and naught

To show for it : a heart-full, too, of prayers !

JOSEPH.

I fear there is no hope !

MEETA.

Don't say it ! Though

For so far we have found men's hearts but stones,

Still will we turn them up. It cannot be

But we will light on one that's flesh and blood.

I won't believe it ! Yea, though from my hand

The hundred thousandth one dropp'd dead as flint,

I'd go to the next as though the human touch

Might meet me there ! No ! while my father lives,

I'll never give up hope to save his life !

JOSEPH.

A girl—and proof against despondence thus !

MEETA.

I often fear you deem me hard of heart.

Perhaps you think I do not weep enough?
It is not that I could not weep—it is
That I won't weep—that I won't give way—that I'll keep
My spirit up—my thoughts about me—waste
Naught that my father wants. I can't afford
To be a child, and melt. No! I must be
A deliverer, and proof to dissolvment
As a rock! I have not shed a single tear
But as a prayer—except to-day, when I gasp'd,
And must have wept or dropp'd, and even then
It came of itself! Thou said'st just now thou fear'd'st
There was no hope? but there is! I came resolved
To keep it from thee, promise had so oft
Enticed belief to balk it. I have a chance
To see the daughter of the Governor.

JOSEPH.

How came this blessed chance?

MEETA.

Ha! blessed sayst thou?
Perhaps 'twill prove so!—The poor human heart,
How it doth build, and build on slightest grounds!
Words dropp'd by chance to pass for prophecies!
We'll pray it may be bless'd—we then may hope it!
Well, I will tell you.

JOSEPH.

Hope begins to dawn!

MEETA.

Didn't I say there was no fear of hope?
I went, as every day I yet have done,
To the Governor's. The man that oped the gate
Was a new warder. A new face, new hope!
I told my tale, and when 'twas done implored him

Prefer my poor petition to his lady,
To grant me briefest audience.

JOSEPH.

To the daughter
Of the Governor?

MEETA.

To her.

JOSEPH.

I see: go on!

MEETA.

Like all the rest, he show'd—not plainly tho',
But by a hint—that charities were things
Of cost, and must be bought with more than thanks.
My purse was officeless, my last balk'd suit
Had of its trust absolved it quite—a wretch
Who bragg'd, to win my bribe, a power he had not,
And added savage mockery to the wrong!
I pleaded destitution. “What,” he cried,
“No toy, no trinket, you could turn to coin!”
And rudely snatching from its place my hood,
Which I had just unloosed, for want of air—
“Ha!” he exclaim'd, “what costly treasure's this!”
As, by the action from its band released,
My hair fell all around me!

JOSEPH.

Thereof make they
High traffic. I have known a head of hair,
Of ordinary goodliness, to bring
A common peasant maid a little dower!
There scarce were price a woman might not set
On one so rich as thine.

MEETA.

Indeed! I would

I then had known its value—I had made
A surer bargain.

JOSEPH.

Durst he ask it of thee?
Wretch! He shall never have it! Thou shalt take
A purse of ducats to him.

MEETA.

It is his
Already. I did let him sever it,
As only 'twere the string that held it up,
And gave it to him.

JOSEPH.

Was not I at hand
To fill thy purse? A quarter of an hour
Had ta'en thee here and back.

MEETA.

And in that time
His mind had changed, or he had been removed,
And in his place another put, and all
Had been to do again, and that, perhaps
With lessen'd chance.—Had he ask'd me for a limb
He had had it—had it!—not one precious moment
Had I staid haggling with him. It had gone
As the hair of my head—aye—as a single hair.
'Tis time I go—

Enter AHAB.

AHAB.

Dispatches have arriv'd.

MEETA.

They bring the order for my father's death.
I see it! Say it. You cannot tell me worse
Than I know.

AHAB.

The news is bad.

MEETA.

I'll not give up
While there is chance the substance of a thread—
A film. Altho' a thousand emperors
Had sworn against the life of his grey hairs,
While it is in them, I will try and save them!

JOSEPH.

Thou lookest faint! Some wine will hearten thee.

MEETA.

I'll have no wine but such as I draw hence,
From my heart! There's not such wine in all thy house
To strengthen me! There's plenty and to spare!
What time is he to die?

JOSEPH.

Tell her.—No use
Withhold it from her. Her spirit is the arch
Which gaineth strength by that which burdens it.

AHAB.

He is to die within three days, altho'
The Governor did so report his case
As might have gain'd for him a milder doom.

MEETA.

Did he? Did the Governor? Did you say
The Governor his case reported kindly?
The Governor? he?—he that's here?—here now
In Prague?—the very Governor of Prague?

AHAB.

The same; but some severe reverse, they say,
Our arms have met with, so have overcast

The imperial mind, that clemency is quench'd,
And thus thy father's death, alas, decreed !

MEETA.

I would be here and twenty leagues from this.

JOSEPH.

Why twenty leagues from this ?

MEETA.

That distance lives
A friend might give me help.

JOSEPH.

Then suffer me
To be thy second self, and see that friend.

MEETA.

He is an enemy to Prague.

JOSEPH.

And Prague
An enemy to thee—and I'm thy friend !
Trust me, my child.

MEETA.

My father told me this,
O thou good man—thou Christian !—Pardon me.

JOSEPH.

Pardon thee, child ? I thank and honour thee :
Thou canst not praise me more than call me that
Thy conscience thinketh best.

MEETA.

Then come with me,
And I'll instruct thee on the way. 'Tis time
I see the servant of the Governor.
Three days we have from this—that's three whole days—
He dies on Saturday—(*ruminating*)—He cannot die !

SCENE II.—AN APARTMENT IN THE GOVERNOR'S.

Enter BARON IDENSTEIN *and* ADOLPHA.

IDENSTEIN.

Indeed, indeed, it was not wisely done !
'Tis wrong that pity should be sufferer
By her sweet nature, as she is, enduring
Her gentle throes in vain—which are relieved
When of avail to those for whom they're borne,
Else, pain incontinently ! 'Twas not right
To promise audience to her, her affliction
Past help. What can'st thou give her but thy tears,
And what are they ? They cannot ope for her
Her father's prison door, nor wash away
The writing of the warrant which decrees
His term of life. Thou should'st have sent her word
"It could not be." It was of no avail.
'Twas rending thy own heart, without repair
Of hers. 'Twas idle waste of agony.
'Twas feeding hope thou knew'st was sure to die !

ADOLPHA.

Is there no hope ?

IDENSTEIN.

There ! were it fate herself
Said "No," thy sanguine nature would not rest,
But ask again with thought she'd change her mind.
His fate is fix'd—within three days he dies.

ADOLPHA.

On Saturday ?

IDENSTEIN.

Yes ; Saturday's the day.

ADOLPHA.

Take me from Prague ! I would not be in Prague
That day ! I see the reverend old man
Dragging along the street, as on the day
I saw him first—by accident approaching
The casement as he pass'd !—his silver'd head
Uncover'd, an unseemly sight ! beset,
As 'twas, by fierce array of threatening arms,
In hands wherein the pith of life was fresh,
Which better far it had become to give
Protection to him than oppose offence.
'Twas only for a moment, but the form
Of the old man has never left me since.
I will not be in Prague the day he dies ;
I wish I could forget when that day comes !—
What day is this ?—When will be Saturday ?
O to have time, 'twixt this and after then,
A blank, that I might pass that cruel day,
Nor know on't till 'twas gone !

IDENSTEIN.

My sweet Adolpha,
A strange and wond'rous compound is thy heart,
Frame of all moods, from gravest to most light,
And all in like extreme ! Thy mirth defies
All other wing ! thy sadness dives a depth
Where none can follow thee ! No eye such stores
Of tears, no cheek such treasury of smiles !
Most natures have their bias, thine hath none,

Save goodness which directs and poises all !
My love ! thou shalt not be in Prague, that day.

ADOLPHA.

But must it come ?

IDENSTEIN.

See there again ! Thy heart
Will take no answer, save what pleases it,
And yet it knows as well as I do know
It cannot have.

ADOLPHA.

My father's Governor !

IDENSTEIN.

The Emperor is his master.

ADOLPHA.

Let him be !
Were I my father, in a case like this,
I would gainsay the Emperor—refuse
To do his bidding, or evade obedience—
Do anything but take the old man's life !
'Tis murder, Idenstein ! He was no spy !
Came on no hostile mission ! nothing did
Could threaten damage to the Emperor's cause—
Only fulfill'd an act of private duty,
To her whom once he served ! Why should he die
For that ? What reason that a giant hand
Be laid on him to crush him to the grave !
A breach of duty were true duty here
Where duty, done, is breach of everything.
For all thou say'st, I can't believe he'll die,
Knowing, as I know, he has no right to die !
I'll see my father.

IDENSTEIN.

To counsel treason to him ?

ADOLPHA.

That is not treason which is not unright ! [Goes out.

IDENSTEIN.

Her virtuous will, will never own a let ;
What she desires, she ever doth infer
The power to do. (*Listens.*) Ha !—Now she pleads to
him.

That were well urged, if earnestly were well !—
I do not hear his answer, but by the tone
'Tis “No !” She comes to the attack again !
A friend in need, Adolpha, with a chance
In thy favour—thou hast none !—Again, I guess
His answer by the tone !—He will not yield—
Nor still will she give up—no advocate
Like one that pleads with heart !—What ! Tears ?—I'm sure
She weeps !—This rain, Adolpha, won't avail !
Duty's a stern defendant ; thou must lose
Thy suit ;—here comes the governor !—Kind heart !
What sun is there !—No cloud can keep it out ;
But lower it ne'er so thick, some beam breaks thro'.

Enter GENERAL KLEINER.

GENERAL KLEINER.

I can't endure it !—won't !—Give me a siege,
With a starved garrison and gaping breach !
Foundations honeycomb'd with mines !—the foe
A hundred men to one !—Or give me a battle
With bayonets cross'd, and cannon mouth to mouth,
And I'm myself ! I know my duty, and
Can act the man !—but save me from the eyes
Of a woman, when she weeps, and I the cause,
And cannot stop her tears !—'Sdeath ! would they drown,
I'd thank them ! In the name of patience, why

Cannot one make a woman list to reason?
Why does that drive her mad which keeps us sane?
Talk reason to her, and her wits are gone!
'Sdeath! I can govern Prague; but not a woman!

IDENSTEIN.

Why, what has happen'd, General?

GENERAL KLEINER.

Don't call
Me General!—call your wife General!—she knows
My duty better than I know it myself!
Tell her of customs, order, penalties,—
You talk of things that she can treat as the thread
She cuts with her hus'ife-scissors! I have served
For fifty years—for more than half that time
Have managed men by units, tens, and hundreds,
And tens of hundreds!—I can't rule a woman!
Rule her?—that's not the question!—would it were!
She must rule me!

IDENSTEIN.

But what's the matter?

GENERAL KLEINER.

Matter?

That wife of yours—that girl—that waxen doll—
Adolpha! Is she not your wife; and don't
You know it? Did you ever say her "nay,"
And prosper?—ever know her to give up
The point her heart was fix'd on? She'd make hay
In December! Mars—a profitable wife!
She'd have the Helder thaw with a north wind
In January, when the frost doth bite
With all its teeth! She'd stop the tide half in,
When it runs strongest. She would stop the sun,
The moon, and all the stars!

IDENSTEIN.

What has she done, sir?

GENERAL KLEINER.

Desired me ope' the prison-door that's shut
By the Emperor's order—let its tenant out—
Laugh at the warrant for his death, that's seal'd
By the Emperor's hand! When I refuse her that—
Which, did I grant her, I should lose my head,
And that were falling somewhat grievously
Short of my due proportions—she insists
Upon a respite, while she goes herself
To plead his cause before the Emperor!
She'd do it! And when I refuse her that,
She prays me set my wits to work, and pass
A fiction off for fact—not killing him,
Altho' he seem to die! She'd make me out
A necromancer! When she's balk'd of that—
Which on as valid reason I refuse,
As one to weave with gyves upon his hands—
She opens on me volleys of loud sobs,
With showers of tears, that try my mettle more
Than hail of lead! I wish you'd rule your wife—
Cut her right short, when she's unreasonable—
Say "No" to her, and nothing else for a year!
You spoil her, Idenstein!—A woman never
Should have her own way!

IDENSTEIN.

Sir, you gave it her
Before I did.

GENERAL KLEINER.

A fool, sir, has a use!
He is a beacon to a man that's wise
Enough to profit by him.

IDENSTEIN.

All her fault
Is but excess of too sweet nature, sir,
Which ever makes another's griefs her own.

GENERAL KLEINER.

And mine, too! Punishment is done away
In Prague! Offenders 'scape, or I must smart
For their penalties! Nor ends it there. No ache,
For ten miles round, but I must share a twinge,
Chance it to come unto her knowledge!—I
Expire with woes of orphans, widows, maids
Forsaken, wives in childbirth—all degrees
Of human, female sufferings—I am *in*
Articulo mortis, every day of my life,
And not a pang my own!

IDENSTEIN.

And then you die, sir,
A good man's death with benisons all round you.

GENERAL KLEINER.

I'd waive the benisons to 'scape the death!

IDENSTEIN.

Indeed—I know you better, sir!—you would not.

GENERAL KLEINER.

I would!—But who comes here?

IDENSTEIN.

As I believe,
The daughter of the prisoner, Sir. Adolpha
Has promised her an audience.

GENERAL KLEINER.

We are attack'd
In flank and rear—Tell her it won't avail!
Persuade her to retreat! Say we have taken
Our ground and we will keep it, stand or fall!

IDENSTEIN.

Had not you better do it, sir?

GENERAL KLEINER.

Not I!

I'm a recruit against their mode of fighting.

[Retires hastily, and sits down near a table.]

Enter MEETA and a SERVANT.

SERVANT—*speaking low to MEETA.*

I'll tell her you are here.

[Goes out.]

IDENSTEIN.

You wish to see

The daughter of the Governor?

MEETA.

I come

To see her. I am promised I should see her.

She said it, as I am informed,—indeed

As I am sure she did. She is a lady:

She cannot break her word. A noble lady,

She would not break her word. A lady, sweet

And pitiful—she will not break her word!

IDENSTEIN.

She will not; but I pray you, for her sake,

Absolve her from it and forego your suit,

Which will avail you nought. It will not lead

To what you want; what is the worth on't then?

And wherefore should'st thou urge it?

MEETA.

I am come

To see the daughter of the Governor;

Come on her promise, as I have been told,

And thou just now hast granted. If she wills

To break her word, then as I came I go!

But if she waits for me to give it back,
She'll wait till I am dead—and then she's free,
As death solves all accounts.

IDENSTEIN.

Why give her pain ;
And bootlessly ?

MEETA.

My father is in prison,
And he is doomed to die within three days,
And I his child, with the faculty of speech,
Cannot acquitted stand to hold my tongue,
But, could I find for it no audience else,
Must make it ring to stones for mercy in him
While yet he breathes ! how then should I be dumb
To human hearts, that are not hard as stones—
At least should not be so.

IDENSTEIN.

Leave me to plead
Thy cause to her. Instruct me what thoud'st have,
I'll urge it to her, and with reasons back
Which thou would'st never dream of,—be there but
A glimpse of hope, I'll see it and point out,
And make it clear to her, and if her heart
Misgives her I'll encourage her. I'm her friend—
Her husband.

MEETA.

You are not my father's child !
You would give up, where I would still go on :
That which would make me plead the heartier,
Would silence you. O, sir, in such a case,
Would you petition for your father's life
At second-hand ? But help me ! O do that !
And I will pay you with a life of thanks !

And pardon me that I reject your counsel,—
I cannot take it, sir!—Indeed I cannot!
My heart, and mind, and sense, are capable
Of nothing but onething—to try all means,
However light or weighty, feasible
Or unfeasible, rational, or wild, or mad,
Allow'd or disallow'd—short of a stain
Would spot my soul—to save my father's life.

GENERAL KLEINER.

'Sdeath, am I chain'd here, that I would be hence,
Yet lack the power to go!

IDENSTEIN.

The lady comes.

So—speak to her, since you will have it so.

Enter ADOLPHA and Servant, who goes out.

This is the daughter of the prisoner.

MEETA—*running up to ADOLPHA and kneeling.*

Bless thee!

ADOLPHA.

Poor girl!—No! not thy knees!—thy arms! Here are mine.

MEETA.

O no! my knee! my knee!—Or would you lift
My body up, lift first my heart, that's low
As misery can lay it! I have a father,
And he's in prison, and I must not see him.
I am his only child, and I have travell'd
Hundreds of miles, and when I reach the gate,
'Tis shut on me, and human beings keep it!
He dies on Saturday, and they can tell me
I shall not see his living face again,
And nothing has he done why they should kill him!
Nothing! no more than you have! An old man
With a pale brow, sweet face, and silver hair,

That would not hurt a fly !—and he must perish,
And no one to console him, and his daughter
Within the wall's breadth of him !—She must not touch him,
See him, or speak to him !—You are a child !
You have a father ! think of me and mine !
Speak for me ! Will you ? Pray the Governor
To bid him let me in and see him ! Won't you ?
Are you going ? Will you speak for me ? Will you get them
To let me see my father ! Do—or here
I'll lie at your feet for ever !—(*falls prostrate.*)

GENERAL KLEINER.

Idenstein,
Can't you stop crying ?

IDENSTEIN.

Sir, can you ?

ADOLPHA—*going to* GENERAL KLEINER.

My father !

GENERAL KLEINER.

I'll not be shaken.

[*Crossing her—she holds him on the other side, kneeling to him.*]

MEETA—*partly raising herself and missing* ADOLPHA.

Has she gone to do it,
Or means she to escape me ?—Ha ! she's there
Kneeling to some one !—'Tis the Governor !
Mercy—O—mercy !

GENERAL KLEINER.

They are taking me
By storm. The citadel is theirs. I see
No use in holding out !—Eh ! Idenstein ?
Must I surrender ? She shall see her father !

[*MEETA falls swooning at his feet—Picture—Scene drops.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—THE OUTSKIRTS OF GENERAL
TORSTENSON'S CAMP.

*Enter RODOLPH, GEROLD, LODOWICK, and others.—Soldiers
dragging in JOSEPH.*

GEROLD.

He is a spy !

LODOWICK.

Drag him along to the guard.]

Let him be tried at once and executed.

GEROLD.

Nay kill him without trial. He's a Jew
Blasphemer, reprobate, extortioner !

JOSEPH.

Nay, Sirs ; but hear me !

RODOLPH.

Hear him.—Let him speak.

Give him fair play.

GEROLD.

Fair play, and to a Jew !

JOSEPH.

You give a thief fair play—a murderer—
And why not me, who neither kill nor steal ?

GEROLD.

Not steal !

RODOLPH.

Have patience !

JOSEPH.

Have I stolen from you ?

What have you lost to lay to my account ?

Is it **your** charity—I have it not ;

But I will **spare** you some of mine ! Perhaps

The stock to serve a Christian may be small,

Yet such as 'tis, it would **not** let me use

A Christian, tho' a thief or murderer,

As you use me !

GEROLD.

You hear him ! Leave him, Sirs,

To me. I'll do his business !

JOSEPH.

A brave man !

GEROLD.

Leave him to me, Sirs ; I account a Jew

But as I would a rat !

JOSEPH.

Obey him, Sirs.

Let go your hold of me, and loose the rat,

Before that dog ! I have seen a cur to turn

Before as small a thing ! I mean it, Sirs.

But as you leave a rat to use his teeth,

Nor arm the dog you set upon a rat,

So that, whate'er the odds, 'tis bite 'gainst bite,—

Give me equality of weapons too,

Hand against hand, at large, and arm'd or not,

And see, if, be the Jew indeed a rat,

The Christian nearer doth approach the man !

RODOLPH.

The Jew has fairly said.

JOSEPH.

Will fairly do,
Give him fair play ! Sirs, you are Christian men !
A Christian father lies in jeopardy
In Prague—a reverend teacher of your faith.
Man hath summ'd up his days ; the number's out
On Saturday, unless Heaven sends him aid ;
He has an only daughter, who essays
To succour him, and spies salvation here,
But cannot come to bring't—a Christian too—
So she must send for't ; and thereto employs
A friend, whose counsel, coffers, roof, hands, blood,
She has, and welcome too, at her command.
And Christian men—You, Sirs !—won't suffer him
To do her will, because he is a Jew !

GEROLD.

We knew not this !

JOSEPH.

You would not know it, Sirs !
You would not hear me ! would not let me speak !
Laid you not hands upon me one and all ?
Vied you not in reviling me ? with death
Did you not threaten me, nor till now give time,
To put a word of deprecation in,
Because I am a Jew !

LODOWICK.

We have wrong'd the Jew.

GEROLD.

I fear we have.

RODOLPH.

Nay, Sirs, I know we have,
So let's ask pardon of the honest man.

JOSEPH.

Ask me no pardon—it is given ere ask'd.
A venial fault's atoned for, when 'tis own'd.
And pray you, Sirs, if you have friends yourselves—
As friends, however fenced in this world, lie
Within the leap of danger—bring me straight,
To one call'd Roselheim, who beareth rank
Among your forces.

RODOLPH.

Here the very man
Comes, as he knew your need. You'll not complain?

JOSEPH.

I never break my word, altho' a Jew.

[RODOLPH and the rest go out.]

Enter RUPERT, MADAME ROSELHEIM, and ESTHER.

Do I not speak to Major Roselheim?

RUPERT.

You have named me, friend!

JOSEPH.

Thanks, Sir, to call me so!

RUPERT.

You have an errand for me—have you not?

JOSEPH.

Yes; but a messenger more welcome far
Than I, this letter, Sir, will tell it you—
I say more welcome—though it brings bad news.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

From Meeta, is it not?

RUPERT.

Yes, mother.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

What
Says Meeta?

RUPERT.

Presently !—I'll tell you all
Anon !

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

I read the letter in your face ;
The old man's doom is seal'd,—not quite, but yet
Almost as sure ?

RUPERT.

You have guess'd it, mother.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Rupert,
Is there no chance for him ?

RUPERT.

There is a chance.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

What is't, my son ?

RUPERT.

I may not tell you, madam.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Were it a breach of confidence ?

RUPERT.

No, mother—

Of duty only. Movements, which are language
To a soldier, give me hopes, and these I am free
To share with you, and do so—not their cause.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Tell me his plight in every circumstance.

RUPERT.

Learn it in one,—he dies within two days,
Unless——

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

What, Rupert ?

RUPERT.

Learn the rest from hope !
Mother, you said the Governor of Prague
Was schoolfellow and choice comrade of my father,
From boyhood even to majority,—
That golden age of life, when hearts that join
Are riveted by metal weatherproof,
That shines and keeps, while those it holds decay !
You would have sent to him ; nay, gone yourself ;
But, save in extreme need, I would not have it.
Send now—indite a letter—state your claim,
And crave delay to the last fraction
Of time that duty will allow—and let
Our Esther be the bearer, under guidance
Of this good man. Come there no other profit,
'Twill place her nearer Meeta—should she need her.
She ne'er divines my care had conn'd this news [Aside.
Before this herald brought it.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Esther !

ESTHER.

Madam ?

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Fear you to go to Prague ?

ESTHER.

To no place, madam,
For you.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

'Tis with a letter to the Governor.

ESTHER.

I'll take it, madam : I'll do any thing
To leave the camp.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Why, what's the matter, Esther?

ESTHER.

That boy—that Hans, is going fast to ruin.
Before they stop, they'll make a soldier of him.
Already has he got their swagger, madam ;
Drinks, swears,—yes, madam, on my life he does !
I'll never take the poor lad home again
The simple thing he was.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Then, Esther, take
The boy along with you.

ESTHER.

I thank you, madam :
Not that I care for Hans ; but innocence
Is a rare thing, and should not be corrupted,
While those who know its value can prevent it.
So as you think it right that the poor lad
Be placed in safety while it can avail him,
I'll take him with me, madam.

MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Do so, Esther ;

Go, find him straight, then come at once to me. [*Goes out.*]

RUPERT.

I have a charge for thee, concerning Meeta ;
But this at once—should any one you love
Remain in Prague on Friday night, take care
They keep the house. You understand me, Esther ?

ESTHER.

Humph ! Yes, I think I do ! But where is Hans ?
Upon my life, I quite forget myself
With care for him. It fits not he and I
Should go together, and be nothing more

Than Hans and Esther ! I have quite forgot
Appearances. And what will people say ?
Here's a dilemma ! If I leave the lad
Behind me, he is ruin'd. They'll be putting,
'Mongst other things, sweethearts into his head.
And I am ruin'd if I take him with me,
And he no right to me, nor I to him !
I could not pass him for my brother—none
Would credit that the selfsame mother bore us !
'Tis out of nature he could be my son.
What shall I do for sake of the poor lad ?
There's no contrivance I can hit upon,
But to make Hans my husband. Well-a-day !
To think that ever it should come to this ;
But, if it can't be help'd, as well be done
To-day as this day year. 'Tis very plain
I must be sacrificed, or Hans be lost,—
And that were cruelty—that must not be !
So, I've made up my mind ! I'll marry him !

SCENE II.—ANOTHER PART OF THE CAMP.

Enter HANS and RODOLPH.

HANS.

And you have been in battle ?

RODOLPH.

Yes.

HANS.

How often ?

RODOLPH.

A dozen times.

HANS.

And never got a wound ?

RODOLPH.

Only a scratch.

HANS.

I would not mind a scratch,—

I would not mind a dozen scratches ! If

It went no further, bayonets and swords

To me were things I'd take no more account of

Than pins and needles. But where was the scratch ?

RODOLPH.

In the left side—a bayonet graz'd me there.

HANS.

Odds, that was near ! wasn't it ? very near !

I should not mind one in the foot or leg,

The hand or arm—but when you come to that,

Fighting is very dangerous ! I don't think

That I should like to be a soldier.

RODOLPH.

Yet

You are the very cut of one.

HANS.

The cut ?

Am I tho' ?

RODOLPH.

One could see it with half an eye.

HANS.

It must be very plain.

RODOLPH.

You were intended

By nature for a soldier.

HANS.

Isn't it strange
That nature never told me so ?

RODOLPH.

She left you
To find it out yourself. It is so plain.

HANS.

And I to live to five-and-twenty years
And not to see it—No !—nor any one
To tell me on't till you did !

RODOLPH.

Friends are few,
One may go far ere find one.

HANS.

Tell me what
You mean by the cut of a soldier, that hereafter
I know myself.

RODOLPH.

A sharp eye—a smart nose.

HANS.

Have I such eye and nose ?

RODOLPH.

You have.

HANS.

Indeed ?
I never dreamt on't ! I have a smart nose
And a sharp eye ? Now would I give a crown
That this were told to Esther ! So ! Go on.

RODOLPH.

You have a pair of shoulders.

HANS.

La ! you jest !
Speak you the truth now ? mean you what you say ?
Have I indeed a pair of shoulders ?

RODOLPH.

Yes.

HANS.

'Tis plain I never knew myself before !
A sharp eye, a smart nose, and pair of shoulders !
I wonder what would Esther say to this !
Anything more ?

RODOLPH.

Ay marry ! many a thing.
A chest that's high and full—a front-rank chest.

HANS.

Never mind that—I like the rear-rank better.
Were I a soldier I would always fight
In the rear-rank—I could do wonders there—
Incredible and never heard of things !—
What call you those who fight upon their knees
And stomachs, or ensconce themselves behind
Hedges and trees, and when the enemy
Advances, make a run of it, and leave
The rest to fight the battle out ?

RODOLPH.

We call them
Sharp-shooters.

HANS.

That's the very name ! I'll be
A sharp-shooter. A sharp-shooter had need
Have a sharp eye, and I have one, you know :
Haven't I ? I'm contented with a chest
That's high and full, but not a front-rank one :
And so a sharp-shooter if anything !
We've settled that—Go on—Were Esther here !
She little dreams that I am such a man !

RODOLPH.

Your limbs are set right under you.

HANS.

They are? You do not say so?
And have I got straight legs with all the rest?
Odds what a man I am! I think I'll be
A soldier.

RODOLPH.

You'd be sure of it, but once
You saw yourself dress'd in your uniform.

HANS.

'Twould make a little change.

RODOLPH.

A little, say you!
'Twould make a hero of you.

HANS.

I should like
To see myself a hero! What was that? [*A shot without.*

RODOLPH.

Only a shot.

HANS.

O, was it nothing more?
A shot! I thought 'twas something else! who minds
A shot?

RODOLPH.

'Tis clear you do not.

HANS.

No—not I!
I fired a shot once when I was a boy,
And kill'd a sparrow—as I live I did!
I to be startled by a shot! (*shot again*) Odds life!
That's shameful waste of powder, and in time
Of war too.

RODOLPH.

Here ! put on this cap of mine,
And show me how you look in it.

HANS.

I please you ?

RODOLPH.

Gods, Sir, you make a show more warlike far
Than would a whole platoon with shoulder'd arms
And bayonets fix'd.

HANS.

What were it did you add
My body to my head !

RODOLPH.

To go by rule
You would be worth a regiment ! How fine
Your eye looks when it rolls ! Here, take my sword
And flourish it.

HANS.

What think'st me match to now ?

RODOLPH.

A whole brigade—Foot—Horse—Artillery,
To sweep a field !

HANS.

I'll be a soldier.

ESTHER—*entering and aside.*

ESTHER.

Hans !

RODOLPH.

Then take the bounty.

ESTHER.

Take it if he dares !

HANS.

I never said I'd take it.

RODOLPH.

But you said
You'd be a soldier.

HANS.

Yes; with Esther's leave.

ESTHER.

O! was it so?—What do you with that cap?
Take't off, or I will put one on your head
Will fit it better! Flourishing a sword!
Have you a mind the boy should cut himself,
You man of war?—Give back the sword and cap.
Sir, you may sell your own limbs if you like,
You know the worth of them; but for the lad's,
They're not his own; and not for market, Sir.

RODOLPH.

And is the bargain off?

HANS.

And don't you hear
What Esther says?—It were a valiant man
Would gainsay her!—I would not for my head!

RODOLPH—*looking alternately at ESTHER and HANS.*

I see!

HANS.

We'll talk of it another time
When she's not by.

RODOLPH (*to Esther*).

Well; I'll let off the lad
So that I get a kiss?

HANS (*placing himself between them*).

You get not that!

Nay, an I die for it, you get not that!

Nay, an you come with swords and bayonets,
Bullets and cannon-balls, you get not that!

ESTHER.

Hans is a man !—Take my advice, and know (*to* RODOLPH)
A lion without proving of his fangs.
Touch me ! and better for you you had been
In prison keeping than at large to-day.
Man never kiss'd me yet, Sir—

HANS.

Only Hans.

ESTHER.

Nor e'er shall kiss me, Sir !

HANS.

Save I'm the man.

ESTHER.

I like a smirking swaggering turkey-cock,
That eyes a woman as he need but look
And swallow her !

RODOLPH.

I'll see your spark again.

[*Goes out.*]

ESTHER.

See he don't prove a fire and scorch you, Sir !
Hans, you have acted like a man to-day,
You're a good lad ; but you were never made
Match for a world like this, to get thro' it
By yourself.—A pity 'tis you have not aunt,
Sister nor mother, that would look to you,
Nor honest woman that might serve for such,
And, maybe, love you better !

HANS.

Esther !—Esther !—

ESTHER.

Why, bless me, Hans ! you're always saying that,
'Tis very plain there's something you would have,
But what that something is, not quite so clear ;
Speak out, Hans, and take heart—I cannot read

The stars, you know ; I'm not a conjuror,
Or a diviner, or a doctor, who
Finds hidden ailments out. I'm nothing but
An honest simple woman, that would do
A kind turn for thee, knew she but the way ;
So want'st thou anything, speak out, good Hans.

HANS.

I want a wife.

ESTHER.

You do not say so !

HANS.

Yes,

I do.—Now, wanted you a husband, Esther,
How well we should be match'd !

ESTHER.

I want a husband !—

But you do want a wife—that makes a change :
And though I do not want a husband, Hans,
Yet I might bring myself, you know, to take one,
To save the wits or life of a poor lad
Like you, that has no mother, sister, aunt,
To look to him ! Know you where bides the Chaplain
O' the regiment ?

HANS.

I do.

ESTHER.

I'll talk with him.

Do you not lead the way !

What, are you not in haste to get a wife ?

I thought you were.

HANS.

I am ; but am so pleased,

I know not what to do !—to go or stay,

To laugh or cry, to talk or hold my tongue.

ESTHER.

Poor, honest lad ! A pity 'twere the world
Should take thee in ! Thou ought'st to have a wife,
If but to look to thee ! 'Twould not be right
To leave thee without one, a day, an hour ;
And such a friend as I'm to thee, at hand.
Would it, Hans ? The poor lad ! he's quite confounded !
How interesting does he look.—Come, Hans !
You know the way to the Chaplain's—I believe—
I think—I'm almost sure I'll take you, Hans !
[*They go out, ESTHER leaning upon him.*

SCENE III.—THE FORTRESS OF PRAGUE—A
ROOM.

GENERAL KLEINER—*without.*

Wait you without.

ADOLPHA—*without.*

We will, Sir.

GENERAL KLEINER—*without.*

I denstein,
Keep guard upon her.

IDENSTEIN—*without.*

There's no need, Sir.

GENERAL KLEINER.

No—

A wife most docile—let her have her way !

[*Enters with the* LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR.

Bring here the prisoner. Do not say 'tis I
That want to see him, nor apprise him how
I am accompanied.—(LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR *goes out.*)—
I had hoped this task

Would have been wholly spared me,—so relapse
Of consciousness did follow on relapse
When nature once gave way, till nearly half
The interval that spares him life was out.
But she recovers, and at once demands
Fulfilment of my word.—What now my course?
A veteran take the field without a plan—
Or take the field at all with mutiny
In the ranks! How come I here? What brought me here?
A regiment of foot, or horse, or what?
Can I believe I came of mine own will?
With aid of mine own limbs, when I would be
A thousand miles away? I must be mad,—
I, that can't bear to see a caged bird!
Mad for a hundred ducats! I would give
That sum—ay, twice as much, to any one
Would bind me hand and foot and take me hence!

[*Re-enter* LIEUTENANT *with* MUHLDENAU.

LIEUTENANT.

The prisoner.

GENERAL KLEINER.

Leave us, good Lieutenant.—(*LIEUTENANT goes out.*)—Sir—

MUHLDENAU.

Your pleasure?

GENERAL KLEINER.

Pleasure, Sir? I have no pleasure!
I'm an unhappy man, that with the power
To do his pleasure cannot do it, Sir.
I know the track I ought to take, and would,
Yet always go the way that's contrary.
Sir, were a fever next door to me, and
I knew removing further would prevent me
From taking it, I would remove next door!

There is in some men a fatality
That knowledge is more loss than profit to them,
For what doth seem their bane as clear as day
Is ever sure to be the thing they do,—
As sight of a descending shell, 'tis known,
Will fix the man who sees it to the spot,
Where he is sure to die, with limbs at large
As his that walks or runs.

MUHLDENAU.

I know you, Sir!
The gracious man they took me first before,
Who pitied me; with patient audience heard me;
Enjoin'd them gently to entreat me, and,
Far as their duty warranted, to make
The pains of bondage light.

GENERAL KLEINER.

Have they obey'd me?

MUHLDENAU.

They have.

GENERAL KLEINER.

You want no comforts they can give you?

MUHLDENAU.

They have done all they could to comfort me,
And Heaven has done the rest. I am to die
On Saturday—I ask'd not at what hour?
Will't please you tell me, Sir?

GENERAL KLEINER.

Sir?

MUHLDENAU.

I perceive
It gives you pain to do't. Don't heed for me—
He feels not death that uses life to die!
The hour, Sir?

GENERAL KLEINER.

Nine o'clock.

MUHLDENAU.

What kind of death

Am I to suffer ?

GENERAL KLEINER.

Sir ?

MUHLDENAU.

I merely ask,

Because there's something in the form of death

To poor humanity, however brave

To meet it. I would know it ere it comes,—

Look at it—meet it with accustom'd eye,—

Not to be startled by it at the time.

I should be all myself—not that I trust

In my own strength—I have a firmer stay.

What death am I to die ?—Is't by the sword ?

GENERAL KLEINER.

It is !

MUHLDENAU.

I'm sorry, sir, to give you pain.

GENERAL KLEINER.

Sir, I can fight !—I love to fight ! I think

The blast of a trumpet music !—Beat a drum

In concert with the shrill throat of fife,

And my head dances !—It is mirth to me

To hear the running roar of musquetry

From wing to wing, along the blazing line !

And when the cannon thunders clap on clap,

So thick there's not a breath of pause between,

I tower as I myself did hurl the bolts !

I have seen death on every side of me,

And given it not a thought ! I have ta'en wounds,

And never felt them in the battle's heat !

But I can't bear to look upon a man
About to die, and in cold blood ! I own
I am a coward there. Forgive me, sir !
Have you a friend, sir, whom you wish to see ?

MUHLDENAU.

Is there one near me ? You're a merciful
Considerate man—you'd know when you would raise
A hope—you would not raise one but to kill it !
Sir, I had learn'd to think a boundary,
'Twixt me and all things living 'neath the sun,
Was drawn, and no more to be cross'd by me
Than the dark frontier of the grave once pass'd !
But you have breathed a word, and it is gone !
I have a child, Sir !—If she knows my plight,
She's here in Prague—she's at my prison door !
Is she ?—Is it of her you speak ?—That sob—
In the next room ! Is it my daughter's heart
That's bursting there ?—Is it ?—My Meeta !—Come !—
Thou know'st thy father !—Fear not for him—come !
He has strength enough to bear the sight of thee ;
But not to want it longer, when he thinks
Thou'rt near him ! Come to him ! Come—come ! my child !

[MEETA enters, rushing into her father's arms ;

ADOLPHA and IDENSTEIN following.

MEETA.

You bear it, father !—See !—and so do I !
O, I was right !—No door that man can shut,
But Heaven can open ! Day did follow day !
Chance pass'd away, and chance ! Yet, spite of all,
I look'd at hope, and would not see it dwindle ;
And 'tis fulfilled ! I have pass'd your prison door !—
I see you !—hear you !—I am in your arms !

[MUHLDENAU and MEETA retire.

GENERAL KLEINER.

Where can Adolpha be, and Idenstein?
What can they be about? What do they mean
By staying here? Why don't they call me hence?
How cool they stand!—how very cool!—while I
Am writhing!—Ay!—A pair of callous hearts!
They would be thought to weep—and if they do,
'They like it! Cough, and seem to wipe your eyes!
Do! Can't you go, if you can't bear it? Don't
You know there is a door? and can't you go,
And take me with you?—Idenstein!—Adolpha!

ADOLPHA.

Sir!

GENERAL KLEINER.

Madam!

IDENSTEIN.

General!

GENERAL KLEINER.

Sir!—I hope you're pleased?

ADOLPHA.

At what, dear sir?

GENERAL KLEINER.

To see two human hearts
Bleeding, that you stay there as you were wood,
Or lead, or stone, instead of flesh and blood!

ADOLPHA.

We thought your duty, sir——

GENERAL KLEINER.

My duty!—Pshaw!
You know you never let me do my duty!

ADOLPHA.

We will withdraw, if you will let us, father!

GENERAL KLEINER.

“ Let us ! ”—You never do but what you’re let !

[GENERAL KLEINER, IDENSTEIN, and ADOLPHA,
move softly towards the door.

MUHLDENAU.

Who is that ?

MEETA.

Which ?

MUHLDENAU.

She that’s moving towards the door !

MEETA.

The lady that obtain’d admittance for me.

MUHLDENAU.

Bid her stop !

MEETA.

My father ?

MUHLDENAU.

Lady, stop ! The face,
Well as the form !—I saw thy mother’s form,
And now I see her face ! Do you not see
Your mother ?

MEETA.

Father, you forget—she died
When I was but an infant !

MUHLDENAU.

True !—you’re right !
I had forgot ! Then see your mother now—
As she was at your age, Meeta !—Yes !—my child !

MEETA.

Sir !—father !—’tis the daughter of the Governor !

IDENSTEIN.

His mind is shaken by imprisonment !

MUHLDENAU.

No, Sir ! my heart is struck ! struck by the form
And face of one that's dead—long dead—yet stands
Alive again before me !

MEETA.

Dearest father,
It is the daughter of the Governor,
The Governor that's there !

MUHLDENAU.

I beg her pardon,
I beg her pardon, Meeta, yet I feel,
As I were asking pardon of my child.
Sir, were those eyes your wife's ?—Those perfect arches,
As though art set a copy unto nature,
To try her cunning ! and that domy forehead
Of feeling, speaking marble ! and the rest
O' the features, with the form therewith consorting !
Were they your wife's ?—If so, they once belong'd
To mine !—I cannot look on her and think
She's not my child. [*Turns up.*

IDENSTEIN.

Why are you lost, Adolpha ? [*Aside.*

ADOLPHA.

I cannot help it ! I am strangely moved. [*Aside.*

IDENSTEIN.

At what, my love ?

ADOLPHA—*aloud.*

To hear a father's voice,
As it did never sound to me before !

MUHLDENAU.

What said'st thou, Meeta ?

MEETA.

'Twas the lady spoke.

MUHLDENAU.

The voice too ! It doth talk to me of home,
As from my hearth—my very hearth it came !
But she's the daughter of the Governor !

[Retires to the back of the stage and sits.]

MEETA.

As his heart drops the hope, mine takes it up !

GENERAL KLEINER.

Idenstein—

IDENSTEIN.

Sir—

GENERAL KLEINER.

Let us go.

IDENSTEIN.

Adolpha !

MEETA.

Stop !

No !—Not a trait ! No more resembles him
Than I !—while as I look at her, methinks,
Touches as of a face I can't recal,
Yet feel as once I knew, start up to me.
You're troubled, Sir—nor yet are *you* at ease, (*to IDENSTEIN*)
So many tokens call him owner, yet
The precious thing that bears them not his own !
Incredible ! impossible—my heart
Protests against it !—yearns for her ! cries out
She's his and mine, and will not be gainsaid !
Are you the daughter of the Governor ?

ADOLPHA.

I am—I am his only child !—

MEETA.

You are !

I kiss your hand and ask your pardon ! but—
What scar is this upon your wrist ?—No knife
Could make this wound, and in your father's house
How came you by it ? Was it by a knife ?

ADOLPHA.

No, by a sword.

MEETA.

When ?

ADOLPHA.

When I was an infant !

MEETA.

Where ?

ADOLPHA.

At the siege of Magdeburg !

MEETA.

Gracious Heaven !

How came you there ?

ADOLPHA.

I know not.

MEETA—to GENERAL KLEINER.

Sir, are you

Her father ? Is he, Sir, her father ?—(To IDENSTEIN)—Both
Do look at one another ! Providence !

What can this mean ? Why are you silent, Sir ?

If she you call your daughter—Look at me !

Don't turn away !—If she you call your child

Was in the siege of Magdeburg, I lost

A sister there.—Is this she ? O, a word

To save a bursting heart ! Her nurse, whose hand

I held by, carried her,—a soldier seized

The woman by the hair—

GENERAL KLEINER.

I smote him down,
And saved the child.

MEETA.

'Tis she ! She's ours ! She's found ! My sister !

MUHLDENAU.

Meeta

Thy sister ! What ! in one another's arms !
Give her to me !

MEETA.

Here, take her to thy heart !
Into it, father ! 'Sister ! Father ! Heaven !

(MUHLDENAU and ADOLPHA embrace—MEETA rushes
up to them, and kneeling, clasps them both.—
Act ends.)

ACT V.

SCENE I.—A ROOM IN JOSEPH'S HOUSE.

Enter MEETA and ADOLPHA.

ADOLPHA.

What place is this, and wherefore am I here?

MEETA.

Art thou afraid of me, my sister?

ADOLPHA.

No.

MEETA.

Then fear not where I bring thee, nor the cause.

O! my new other self, were it a time,

I'd give thee vouchers of heart-coined words

To prove thy safety—good of every kind—

Dear to me—worlds, aye, worlds beyond my own.

Dost trust in me?

ADOLPHA.

I do.

MEETA.

Wilt do my bidding—

Wilt do't to-night, however questionable,

Inexplicable, strange?

ADOLPHA.

Your words are darkness,

Which yet I trust myself to, with your looks

Of Truth and Love for guides. I'll do your will.

MEETA.

My sister, my dear sister, let me think,

And lay your cheek the while a space to mine;
There, there, thou prompt'st me sweetly with the touch
Of thy sweet cheek. I have comfort for thee, sister—
Our father will not die.

ADOLPHA.

How know you that ?
The Governor has heard no tidings yet—
The distance greater, than his courier,
Despatch'd on the instant, with the prayer for mercy,
Could compass in a day !

MEETA.

He will not die.

ADOLPHA.

My sister !

MEETA.

What ?

ADOLPHA.

Your words are oracles
I trust to, with a thousand human fears
To shake my heart.

MEETA.

Our father will not die !
Now listen ; there will be a storm to-night—
Fierce rain with deluge, high uprooting wind,
Thunder and thunder-bolts. Look in mine eyes,
And let them serve thee for interpreters,
To make my dark words clear. 'Twill break around
Our father's prison ; there its rage will play,
Nor, till it bursts an entrance open to him,
To set him free, stop smiting ! Can'st thou read,
Without a glossary ? This house will be
Beyond its range !

ADOLPHA.

My husband, and my father !
I cannot help it, he has been my father
In all things but my blood.

MEETA.

There's nothing wrong.
'Tis very right. I'll call him father too ;
So think him, feel him too, for thy dear sake.
And now thy promise, sister ! Weigh my words.
Thy husband and the Governor may fall ;
Here they are safe.—Don't interrupt me, sister,
Time's brief and swift, and action must be instant,
Or not at all.—Thou must indite a letter,
Urging their prompt attendance here—alone—
On matter of as pressing moment as
Question of life or death. I know the thought
Thou would'st give utterance to—'tis not an act
Of treachery, but duty.—Thou did'st promise
Obedience to me.

ADOLPHA.

Hardly dost thou task me,
But I'll respect my word.

MEETA.

Then prove it straight,
Sit down and write the letter. O, my sister,
Confide in me ! do it without stint ! with cheer !—
That's right !—you will !—go on !

ADOLPHA *writes*.—*Enter* JOSEPH.

JOSEPH.

The trusty friends
I told you of are come.

MEETA.

I thank you. Armed ?

JOSEPH.

A weapon each beneath his gaberdine.

MEETA.

How many are they ?

JOSEPH.

Twenty.

MEETA.

That is right;

Their number makes resistance idle. Yet
As courage does not take account of odds,
And slightest scath to them were wound to us,
'Twere well they should disarm your visitors
On the unprepared instant. Is it not strange
I grow more calm as the dread crisis comes
Of this momentous night ? You are aware
Whatever befalls, the motive of the act
Holds you absolved :—besides, it is not yours,
But mine !

JOSEPH.

I take it all on mine own head.

MEETA.

There mustn't be a light when they come in,
Lest it betray thy friends !—

Go send me now

That servant of the Governor who came
Along with us. Is't written, sister ?

ADOLPHA.

Yes.

MEETA.

Thank you, my sister ; now direct it.

Enter GOVERNOR'S SERVANT.

Sir, seek straight the Governor, and give him this.

[SERVANT *goes out.*

Now, sister, come, and be thou strong of heart:

I'll give thee clearer reasons on the way.

This night of death shall bring a day of life. [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—ANOTHER ROOM IN JOSEPH'S
HOUSE.

Enter HANS.

HANS.

I wonder when the honeymoon begins !

I'm one day married, and no glimpse on't yet !

Or shall I ever have a honeymoon,

Or is there such a thing ? Until I see it,

I'll not believe it. Twenty leagues of travel

Is not a honeymoon ! Strange company,

That care no doits for me, nor I for them,

Are not a honeymoon ! A dinner snapp'd,

Not eaten, can't be call'd a honeymoon !

'Tis Esther's fault ! No sooner were we married,

Then off she sets for Prague—nor leaves me choice,

Except to stay behind, or come with her.

Of course I do the latter, as beseems

A married man. I know my duty, but

I see no honeymoon, or chance of it !

No merry-making !—not a soul I know

To give me joy ! No presents, visitings,

Feastings, and dancing, as I know are wont

At other people's marriages, with scores

Of little tricks and rogueries they play.

I have not had a laugh—and here I'm left,

Five hours alone ! Is this a honeymoon ?
And if it is, I would I ne'er had been
A married man ! I'm fit to hang myself.

ESTHER—*entering*.

Husband !

HANS.

Well, wife ?

ESTHER.

You look not happy !

HANS.

No.

ESTHER.

And why, dear chuck ?

HANS.

Because I am not so.

ESTHER.

Not happy !

HANS.

No.

ESTHER.

Why, am not I thy wife ?
Treat I not thee kindly and lovingly ?
Do I not call thee nubby, spouse, and chuck,
And every other kind of tender names ?
What want'st thou to content thee, dearest love ?

HANS.

I want a honeymoon.

ESTHER.

A honeymoon ?
Why this is it ! 'Tis on, my honey-love,
And almost all to come.

HANS.

'Tis on ? 'Tis not !

Be this the honeymoon, I'm sick of it !
I want no more of it ! Will have no more.

ESTHER.

O cruel—cruel Hans.

HANS.

If I had thought
To pass such honeymoon as this, I ne'er
Had married.

ESTHER.

Would you have me break my heart ?

HANS.

I have no comfort with thee.

ESTHER.

Do I live
To hear thee say so ?

HANS.

No delight in thee.

ESTHER.

No, Hans ?—You'll make me wish that I were dead !

HANS.

I took thee for a helpmate—thou art none !
I scarce set eyes upon thee ! Thou art out,
Five hours and more, and hast not told me where.

ESTHER.

I went on business, Hans, that's not my own.

HANS.

Thou hast no business with such business ! Fit
I mope at home, and have a wife that ought
To keep me company !—I'm fairly turn'd
From honey into gall !—What business was it,
Took thee away ?

ESTHER.

I may not tell.

HANS.

You must !

ESTHER.

I won't !

HANS.

I'll show her, I'll be master ! Now,
Or never—I'm resolved !—One whisper'd me,
As from the chaplain's we came out—"Beware !—
Look to your wife, sir !"—'twas the corporal
Tried to beguile me—"mind ! or she'll put on
What is no proper part of woman's gear !"
So I'll begin in time ! What bus'ness was it
Took thee away ?

ESTHER—*gently*.

I will not tell thee, Hans !

HANS—*angrily*.

You won't ?

ESTHER—*more angrily*.

I won't, Hans !—Mind what you're about !
You know me !

HANS—*angrily*.

Yes !—but yet you know not me !—
I will not have it !—won't allow it !

ESTHER.

What ?

HANS.

To have thee gadding in the honeymoon—
If honeymoon it be !

ESTHER.

If honeymoon
It be ?

HANS.

I say it is no honeymoon!—
Where is the wine?—where are the cakes?—where are
The sports and games?—where are the friends and neighbours?
Why are we here, and not in Mariendorpt?
I thought we should go thither, when I made
A wife of thee!

ESTHER.

You made a wife of me?
You say it, sir?—'Twas I made you a husband!

HANS.

And if you did, I'll keep myself a husband—
I will be master!

ESTHER.

Hear him!

HANS.

Lord!

ESTHER.

O dear!

HANS.

And lord of that, I'll not be left alone
Again!—I won't!—to fret myself from wine
To vinegar!

ESTHER.

Look, sir!

HANS.

Look, ma'am!

ESTHER.

I tell you——

HANS.

And I tell you!

ESTHER.

I'll make you know yourself!

HANS.

You will?—I'll run away to Mariendorpt!

ESTHER—*frightened*.

You won't, dear Hans?

HANS.

I'll be divorced—I will!

ESTHER.

You'll kill me, Hans!

HANS.

I'll take another wife!

ESTHER—*crying*.

O dear! O dear!

Was it for this, I let you win my heart—

O'ercome my hatred of your tyrant sex—

And from my state of happy singlehood,

Transform me to a miserable wife?—

O Esther! Esther!—woman never knows

When she's well off, until she is undone!

HANS.

Don't cry! 'Twill spoil your eyes! My wrath is soothed,

I'm your own Hans again—your loving Hans!

I'm pacified—I'm calm'd. The storm's blown o'er;

All's smooth and still, no ripple now, nor breath.

ESTHER.

I'll tell thee all, Hans.

HANS.

No, you shan't!—I say

I will not hear a word—a syllable,

As I'm your husband.—Let her have her way,

So that she keeps to wearing her own clothes!

ESTHER.

I thank you, Hans. I see you love me still.

H

HANS.

Love you ?—Adore you !—Idolize you !—But
'Twill never do to want our honeymoon ! [*They retire.*]

*(Enter abruptly GENERAL KLEINER and IDENSTEIN,
followed by JOSEPH.)*

GENERAL KLEINER.

What means this violence ? What men were those
Disarm'd us in the hall ? The lady where,
That sent for us ?

JOSEPH.

No ill is meant you, Sir,
But good. The men disarm'd you, are your guards,
Trusty for you to death. The lady's gone.

GENERAL KLEINER.

'Tis all thy wife's contriving, Idenstein !

IDENSTEIN.

You know the value of a thousand ducats ?

JOSEPH.

I do.

IDENSTEIN.

I'll give you them to set us free.

JOSEPH.

Took I the sum, 'twould be to peril that
Were worth it to you countless times—your lives !

IDENSTEIN.

Our lives !

JOSEPH.

They are in my care.

GENERAL KLEINER.

Look, honest friend ;
Wilt thou consent to set us free at once,

There's not a unit in two thousand ducats,
But I will count thee down.

IDENSTEIN.

Thou art a Jew,
And wilt not list to reason?

JOSEPH.

Not such reason
As that. There's not in Prague that bulky sum
Could weigh—the matter of a line—the scale
Wherein my pledge to keep you here is put—
My love—my gratitude—my principle—
Which I respect, my Lord, altho' a Jew!

GENERAL KLEINER.

Dost thou reflect that I'm the Governor?
That I can punish thee? That I can throw thee
Into a dungeon?—put thee to the rack?
Load thee with chains, consign thee to the galleys?—
Hang thee, good Jew?

JOSEPH.

I know it very well.
I know thou hast the power, altho' thou lack'st
The will, to execute a cruel deed;
And when befits the penalty to fall,
Dost use the keen sword with a melting eye.
Every one knows the Governor of Prague.

GENERAL KLEINER.

Every one knows him for the fool he is!

JOSEPH.

Altho' a Jew, Sir, I do honour you.
The hospitality I force upon you—
Except compulsion—I have taken care
Should stand acquitted of all disrespect.
That room presents refreshment—that beyond

Repose. One night alone you are my guest,
And shalt to-morrow fully learn the cause
Why you are here, and then be free to go.
So pray you find contentment, if you can,
Where profit cannot come of discontent.

[Goes out.]

(As ESTHER and HANS are following, IDENSTEIN beckons
the former.)

IDENSTEIN.

Hark you, fair lady, you are beautiful.

ESTHER.

I know I am.

HANS.

She knows she is.

IDENSTEIN.

She is ;

And beauty argues goodness—and if goodness
Be not made up, 'mongst other precious things,
Of generosity, 'tis negative,
And proves of no account !

HANS.

What's negative ?

IDENSTEIN.

A diamond necklace clasp'd around your neck,
A score of ducats to such several drop,
And each the twentieth fraction of the set,
Would not be out of place.—Is there a window
Whence one might drop himself into the street ?

HANS.

No, there is not ! You put no necklace, Sir,
About her neck ! 'Tis mine, and not her own !
Go, Esther !

ESTHER.

Sir, I am not to be bribed.

HANS.

That's right—but go !

[ESTHER goes out.

IDENSTEIN.

You are her husband, friend ?

HANS.

I am.

IDENSTEIN.

And well she chose you.

HANS.

So she did.

IDENSTEIN.

Art thou in service ?

HANS.

Yes.

IDENSTEIN.

Would'st thou not rather

Be thy own master ?

HANS.

Who would not ?

IDENSTEIN.

Would'st like

To be a hero ?

ESTHER—*without*.

Hans !

HANS.

I'm coming !—Yes, (*to IDENSTEIN,*)

Knew I a way was safe.

IDENSTEIN.

You have a scruple

To be a soldier ?

HANS.

A small scruple.

ESTHER—*without.*

Hans !

HANS.

I'm coming.

IDENSTEIN.

Would you like to have a farm ?

Have your own serving-men and serving-maids ?

Keep your own swine and kine ? Ride your own horse ?—

You'd look a man on horseback !

HANS.

So I would !

IDENSTEIN.

All these are thine, wilt go an errand first.

HANS.

Where ?

ESTHER—*without.*

Hans !

HANS.

I'm coming, Esther.

ESTHER.

Come along !

HANS.

Where ?

ESTHER—*appearing at the door.*

Hans !

HANS.

I'm coming, Esther.

ESTHER.

Come at once !

[*Pulls him off.*]

IDENSTEIN.

We are a pair of birds, Sir, in a cage.

GENERAL KLEINER.

Birds ?—We are fools ! This comes of my good-nature !

It still has been my ruin ! I was made
A dunce by my mother, for my fondness of her !
What was lack'd in spoiling me, aunts then made up—
I was so docile, bidable to them !
My sisters brought me to destruction by
Improving my good temper, which they made
Their ready scape-goat in all kinds of scrapes ;
And which their gentle friends in dimity
Did use, to get me into divers straits,
From which to extricate myself were only
Entanglement anew ! My wife did crown
My ruin ! My sweet disposition made her
So fond of me, to please her I would feign
Sickness, that she might play my nurse. One thing
Alone was wanting to my quite undoing—
A child, and that, as nature would not find me,
I must provide myself with—thy Adolpha—
Who for her own ends keeps us prisoners here !
What's to be done ?

IDENSTEIN.

To bear what must be borne.
They that command us are a host to one.

GENERAL KLEINER.

Let's in, then, and submit.

IDENSTEIN.

I follow, Sir.

GENERAL KLEINER.

What I was ever, a good-natured man ! [*They go out.*]

SCENE THE LAST—A DUNGEON.

MUHLDENAU *asleep on a couch*—MEETA *sitting near, with*
ADOLPHA *kneeling by her, sleeping with her head on*
MEETA'S *lap.*

Enter LIEUTENANT.

MEETA.

Softly !—They sleep !—Your news is bad ?

LIEUTENANT.

It is.

The answer is arrived. With fruitless search
They have sought the Governor : not finding him,
On me, as second in command, devolved
The painful task to break the packet open,
Which gives no hope of life.

MEETA.

It was expected :

We are prepared.—So, please you, softly tread,
As you depart again.—(LIEUT. *goes out.*)—He has awaked
her !—

Sleep, sister, sleep !

ADOLPHA—*starting.*

What time of night is it ?

MEETA.

It is no longer night, but morning, sister.

ADOLPHA.

Morning ?

MEETA.

The chimes of a new day have struck
Again and yet again !

ADOLPHA.

How often, sister ?

MEETA.

Thrice.

ADOLPHA.

It is very still.

MEETA.

Too still, but we shall hear
The sound of stirring shortly.

ADOLPHA.

You are sure ?

MEETA.

I am.

ADOLPHA.

You comfort me !—you are so calm !

MEETA.

Sister, we both had need be calm !—Look there !

ADOLPHA.

How sound our father sleeps !—Knows he our hope ?

MEETA.

No !—it might draw his thoughts from better hope :
Hope that doth ever in possession end ;
Hope that hath naught of earth in it, to crumble
I' the grasping. Sister, I know my father !—
On earth, he has lived in heaven !—Don't fear for him !
He is the happy man, that is prepared
To live or die !

ADOLPHA.

He will not die !

MEETA.

Speak softly !

He is awaked ! It can't be help'd. Dear sister,
Let it not melt thee, should he talk of death.

For tears are catching things, and nature's nature,
Long as it breathes. Let's countenance the calm
Which his pure spirit keeps.

MUHLDNAU.

Meeta!

MEETA.

Here, father.

MUHLDNAU.

What, both my children!—both!—Adolpha, too!
Is not this merciful, to have you here?
That my last earthward sigh I am permitted
To breathe upon your heads in blessing you?
What is the time, my Meeta?—How far on
Is my last day within this prison-house?
These walls of clay, in which the spirit's pent—
That's going back to Him who lodged it here!
'Tis nothing else! How easy, then, to die,
To him who thinks it so! What is the time?

MEETA.

Another day is onward.

MUHLDNAU.

To that window
Comes the first beam that's herald of the sun—
See if there's sign of the fair messenger,
Or shall I do 't, my child?

MEETA.

No, father.

MUHLDNAU.

Well,
How is it?—Is there mark on the horizon—

A blending as of light with darkness, or
Something that's plainer?—Tell me, child ! Mine eye
Is fix'd on day, to which noonday is night !

MEETA.

'Tis early morning—a dun glow—almost
A streak.

MUHLDENAU.

The boundary of yesterday
Is cross'd some hours. Come hither, both of you.
Kneel down ! The longest time that man may live
The lapse of generations of his race,
The continent entire of time itself
Bears not proportion to eternity,
Huge as the fraction of a grain of dew
Comeasured with the broad unbounded ocean !
There is the time of man—his proper time :
Looking at which, this life is but a gust,
A puff of breath, that's scarcely felt ere gone !
Then comes a calm that lasts. My youngest one,
Least known, but not less loved—My Meeta—

MEETA.

Father,
Am not I part of both ?

MUHLDENAU.

My noble child !
My Christian-trained child ! I did thee wrong
To fear exception thou might'st take at that
Which made my children equal. My found one !
My blessings on thee full as upon her
Was never from my side. Join hands with her !
Love her for ever ! as thyself. Two hearts
That join in truth, do make a wall of rock

'Gainst which the surges of the world may lash,
But only break themselves.

ADOLPHA.

I hear a noise !

'Tis——

MEETA.

Sister, peace. What heeds a noise ?

MUHLDENAU.

I think

I heard it too—and understand it; but

Whate'er it is, it matters not to me.

I see—the light comes on. Meeta, my child,

Thy father gives thee thanks for hours and hours

Of happiness. You have let fall her hand—

Take it again—never let go the love

That now doth join thy sister's hand to thine !

And take thy father's blessing, free and full,

Which Heaven attests that thou hast merited,

Who never wast but dutiful to me ! [Noises nearer.]

ADOLPHA.

Hear you the sounds again, and louder ?

MEETA.

Peace !

Dear sister, if it is to come, it will.

[Noises again, and nearer yet.]

MUHLDENAU.

What, Meeta ? These are not accustomed sounds.

There is a shining something in thine eye,

That looks like hope—and thine, my other child !

My children ! is there hope ? I'm human still !

I'll live for you, my children.—(Noises again.)—Those are
shouts.

They move not with such sounds who come to see

The spectacle of an untimely death—
For human nature, howsoever wild,
Is human still. [*Noise very loud, as of a general attack.*]

MEETA.

Yes, father, there is hope !

Enter LIEUTENANT.

What come you for ?

LIEUTENANT.

The prisoner.

MEETA.

For what ?

LIEUTENANT.

To place him in securer keeping.

MEETA.

Hence !

He's in his children's arms—or leave him here,
Or take us all together.

(Shouts and reports of musquetry and cannon.)

SOLDIER—*enters.*

You are called for [*To* LIEUTENANT.
To look to our defence ! They come upon us
A thousand men to one—the castle's lost !

ADOLPHA.

He's saved—

[MEETA

Not yet !

(Noise as of something giving way and falling.)

ADOLPHA.

Hear you ?—They burst the gates !

MEETA.

It may be something else.

MUHLDENAU.

Ah, now to die—
Were pain !

[Noise as of people ascending.]

ADOLPHA.

The rush of steps !

RUPERT—*without.*

Burst in the door.

MEETA.

'Tis Rupert's voice—My father's saved—He lives !

RUPERT—*bursting in with others.*

My Meeta ! honoured father !—we have come
With life and liberty !

MEETA.

We thank you, Rupert !
Rupert, I knew you would not let him die !
How far is Prague your own ?

RUPERT.

This quarter, Meeta,
Which yet commands the rest ! This post was long
Our General's aim ; yet so he doubtful kept
His eagle hovering, the mighty pounce
Your strait accelerated, none could guess,
Until his fated quarry felt him down !

MEETA.

Send trusty friends, and strong, along with me ;
Speak not, but let thy answer be the act.

RUPERT.

Dismiss your care ! It is not needed, Meeta.
The faithful Hebrew met me in advancing,
And took in charge a chosen band, to watch
Success, and bring thy friends to thee : by this
I doubt not they are here—

Enter JOSEPH—conducting GENERAL KLEINER and
IDENSTEIN.

The Governor ?

GENERAL KLEINER.

Yes, Sir,—but not your prisoners—that honour
These ladies claim.

ADOLPHA.

Forgive us, father !

GENERAL KLEINER.

What !

Now thou hast found thy father ?

ADOLPHA.

Father still !

MUHLDENAN.

Give me the Hebrew's hand—the Christian's friend—
His elder brother, tho' with difference.

JOSEPH.

All men should thus be brothers.

HANS.

We shall have

Our honeymoon at last.

ESTHER.

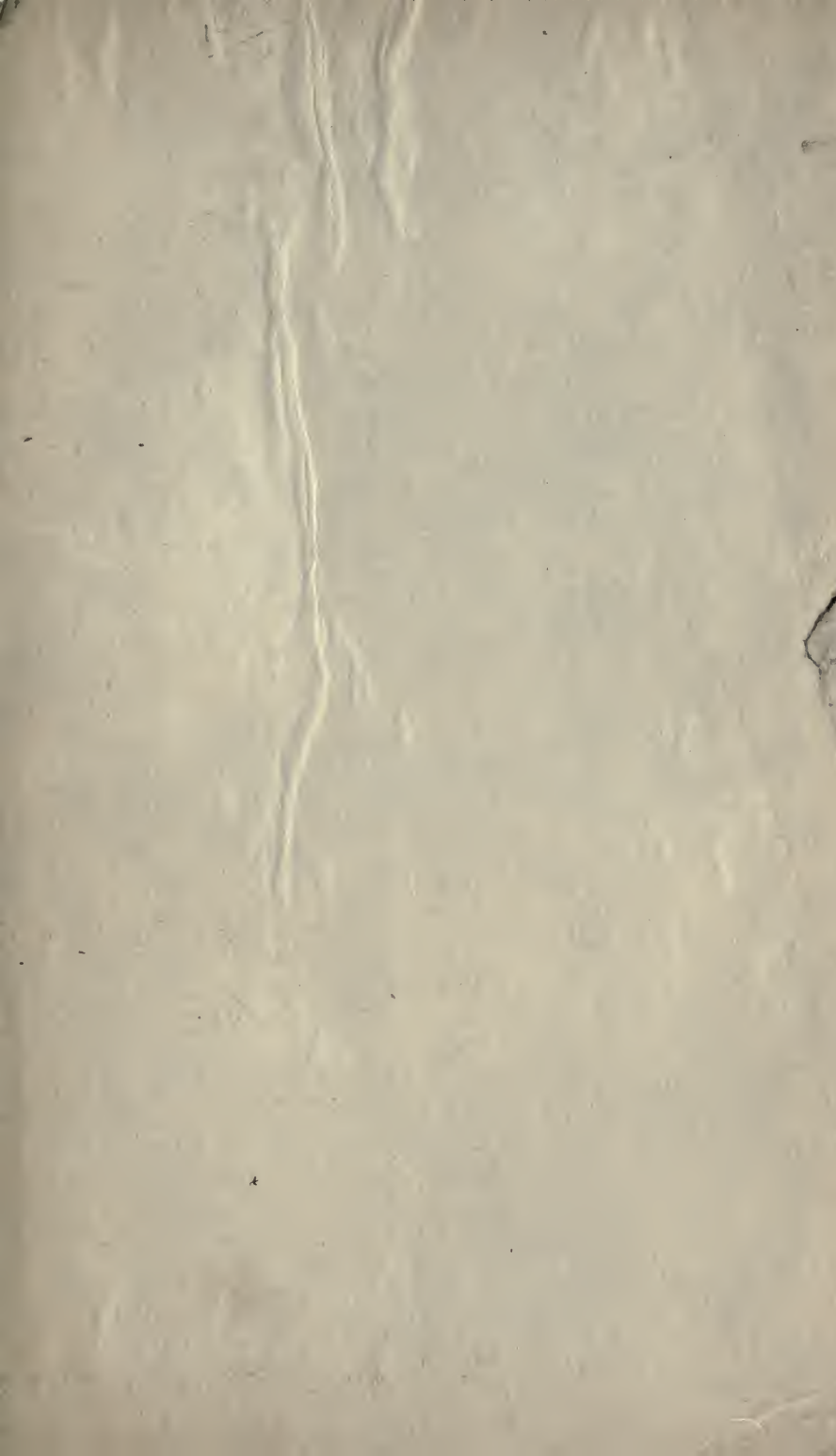
Be silent, Hans.

MEETA.

Let all be silent, save the grateful hearts,
That speak in humble confidence to you.

THE END.

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